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Saturday, April 1, 2017

Carberry return a huge boost for Hants



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SAINTS 0 CHERRIES 0

Arter slip costs Cherries chance of famous derby win at St Mary's



SPOT KICK SHOCKER



In-depth guide to Hampshire's 2017 season

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Waterlogged Stags hit by April showers

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Youth football cup finals picture special

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SAINTS



Young fans with Sammy Saint before the south coast derby



Fans with Sammy Saint in the St Mary's sunshine.



Sammy Saint meets Saints fans.



Thumbs up - Sammy Saint meets a young supporter.



A colourful Saints fan inside St Mary's.

SAINTS 0 CHERRIES 0

By Simon
Walter



SAINTS were grateful for a goal-line clearance and a penalty miss as they shared a goalless draw at home to AFC Bournemouth.

Harry Arter blazed a 78th-minute spot-kick several feet over Fraser Forster's cross bar after his standing foot slipped in front of the Northam Stand.

The miss was greeted with much laughter from the Saints fans and summed up a match that seemed destined to finish goalless, given the number of missed opportunities.

Saints created more openings, but the visitors had the two best chances.

Steven Davis denied ex-Saint Andrew Surman with a 33rd-minute goal-line clearance and a brilliant save by Boruc kept out Jay Rodriguez's stunning 44th-minute volley.

Adam Smith struck a post and Arter nearly made amends for his spot-kick miss but Forster flew to his left to keep out the midfielder's swerving late cross-shot.

But otherwise both sides failed to test the respective goalkeepers enough, with Saints clearly missing Manolo Gabbiadini.

Dusan Tadic had an early chance to back up his recent complaints about being substituted too early.

When James Ward-Prowse's header put him through he had time to pick his spot from the edge of the area, but fired over a left-footer.

Cherries had their moments during the first period.

Ryan Fraser's cross from the left was headed clear and Charlie Daniels' sent in a cross from a similar position before sliding in to tackle Rodriguez at the other end as the Saints forward galloped down the right flank.

Tadic fired a first-time cross shot wide of the far post and Rodriguez was flagged offside before putting the ball in the net at the second attempt after another wonderful delivery from Bertrand.

Saints were putting together some delightful passing patterns and from another Tadic pass, Rodriguez fired low from the left touchline, which Boruc was equal to at the near post.

Rodriguez appeared to win a corner at the near post, only for referee Jon Moss to award a corner kick, a decision that bore the wrath of the Saints fans in immediate proximity in the Northam.

Nathan Redmond was brought down by Marc Pugh after a typically exciting run into the Cherries half, but the free-kick came to nothing as Romeu headed tamely into the hands of Boruc.

Brilliant defending from Stephens against King from Dan Gosling's pass prevented Cherries' in-form frontman from getting a clear sight of goal.

Sarcastic applause greeted

Lucky escape for Saints



AFC Bournemouth's Harry Arter reacts and looks back at the pitch after missing from the penalty spot during the Premier League match at St Mary's.

TEAM NEWS

Saints manager Claude Puel made one change to the team that lost 2-1 at Spurs last week with Jay Rodriguez coming in for the injured Manolo Gabbiadini.

Rodriguez was Puel's first change in five matches and started his first game since Saints' last home game, the 3-1 defeat against West Ham way back on February 4.

Meanwhile, Cherries are unchanged after back-to-back Premier League wins at home to West Ham and Swansea, following their 1-1 draw at Manchester

Moss's decision to award Saints a corner after a tackle on Rodriguez.

Fraser nearly intercepted it but collided with Ward-Prowse in doing so. He went down clutching his knee, before hobbling on, gamely.

He showed no sign of lasting damage when he delivered a couple of good corners cleared by a Yoshida header and a Forster punch, from which Gosling fired over.

Cherries' best chance of the first half came in the 33rd minute, but Davis's goal-line clearance

United last month.

SAINTS: Forster, Cedric, Yoshida, Stephens, Bertrand, Davis, Romeu, Ward-Prowse, Tadic, Redmond, Rodriguez. Subs: Hassen, Caceres, McQueen, Clasie, Hojbjerg, Boufal, Long.

CHERRIES: Boruc, Smith, Francis, Cook, Daniels, Fraser, Gosling, Surman, Pugh, King, Afobe. Subs: Allsop, Cargill, Brad Smith, Arter, Ibe, Wilshere, Stanislas.

Referee: Jon Moss



AFC Bournemouth's Marc Pugh has an attempt at goal as Fraser Forster closes him down,

dangerous crosses in quick succession, the second of which created a chance for Tadic, who again missed the target, firing wide from 12 yards.

Jack Stephens did well to block a Benik Afobe strike before also requiring treatment following a collision with Forster, who clattered into him in his attempt to clear the ball in a packed penalty area.

As half-time drew near, Maya Yoshida sent a header flashing across goal and wide of the far post from a Tadic corner.

PINK

SAINTS



Ex-Saint Artur Boruc saves from Jay Rodriguez.



AFC Bournemouth manager Eddie Howe



A pitch invader attempts to get a selfie with Saints goalkeeper Fraser Forster - but ends up being tackled by a steward.



Dusan Tadic about to be challenged.

But the moment of the first half came in the 44th minute, when Boruc dived full stretch to his left to keep out Rodriguez's thumping half volley.

It was heading for the top corner and would have been a goal-of-the-season contender to rank alongside his stunner at the Vitality Stadium in December.

Surman was replaced by Arter a couple of minutes into the second half, a change presumably related to his earlier collision with Forster.

After a quiet opening to the second half, and with the ball at the

other end of the pitch, came the bizarre sight of a pitch invader trying to take a selfie with Forster.

Within a minute, Cherries missed a gilt-edged chance on the hour. Josh King slid the ball to the unmarked Afobe, who should have at least hit the target but fired wide of the left-hand upright as Forster came out to narrow the angle.

Redmond had a shot saved by Boruc. After firing the follow-up across goal and wide, Ward Prowse was substituted in a double swap with Rodriguez also go-

ing off.

Sofiane Boufal and Shane Long were introduced.

Boufal was bundled off the ball by Fraser in the penalty area after some sensational skill midway through the second half.

Moss waved away the claims for a penalty and it seemed as though the match was destined to finish goalless when Long dinked the ball over Boruc only to see the ball drift wide of the far post.

Soon after Jack Wilshere's 70th-minute introduction, Cherries found a second wind. Smith skidded a 20-yarder against the foot of

the post and a cross from the left was blocked as Wilshere lurked on the edge of the six-yard box.

Saints continued to defend manfully, with Romeu sliding in to deny the Arsenal man on the edge of the penalty area.

Then Cherries were awarded their penalty when Bertrand was adjudged to have tugged Fraser.

Arter's standing foot gave way as he prepared to strike and he skied the ball high into the Northam Stand. Cue raucous laughter from the home fans.

But Arter nearly had the last laugh with a powerful strike that Forster was equal to.

Pochettino still clinging to dream

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino says his side "still believe" after cutting Chelsea's Premier League lead to seven points.

Second-half goals from Eric Dier and Heung-min Son handed Spurs a comfortable 2-0 success at Burnley as table-topping Chelsea suffered a surprise reverse against Crystal Palace.

Palace, who visit St Mary's on Wednesday, claimed a shock 2-1 win at Stamford Bridge - Chelsea's first home loss since September.

Chelsea's advantage is still a considerable one with just nine games of the season remaining but now there is just enough hope for Pochettino to cling to in the run-in.

"I am very happy, very pleased. It's an important, a massive three points for us to still believe we can fight for the title," said the ex-Saint.

"We showed great belief and character and faith. It is always difficult in the first game after international duty, all the players arrive at different dates, but we were very professional.

"That makes us proud." Spurs certainly did not look like title



Mauricio Pochettino.

challengers in a stodgy first half and saw their game plan disrupted by injuries to Harry Winks and Victor Wanyama shortly before half-time.

But they rallied, aided by a controlled display from Wanyama's replacement Mousa Dembele, and when Dier pounced on Jeff Hendrick's error in the 66th minute it looked to be enough.

Christian Eriksen's glorious pass and Dele Alli's square ball allowed substitute Son to make it safe 13 minutes from time, leaving Pochettino a satisfied man.

"It's true, in the first half it was difficult to play in the way we normally play but throughout the second half we dominated the game and created chances," he said.

"We fully deserved the three points. Maybe it was not brilliant but it was very professional."

"It's always a difficult place to play, Burnley, many teams struggle to get a good result."

"But for to analyse the game after 90 minutes, we fully deserved this result."

Burnley boss Sean Dyche has now seen his side go seven games without a win in the league, drawing them back into a relegation battle they looked to be edging clear of.

Their buffer zone over the bottom three is now just five points.

Dyche said: "My lads know they still have a challenge ahead. There are no done deals in the Premier League."

SAINTS V CHERRIES, DERBY PICTURE SPECIAL



Jay Rodriguez in action during the derby.



Jay Rodriguez appeals to the assistant referee after being flagged for fouling Cherries' Simon Francis.



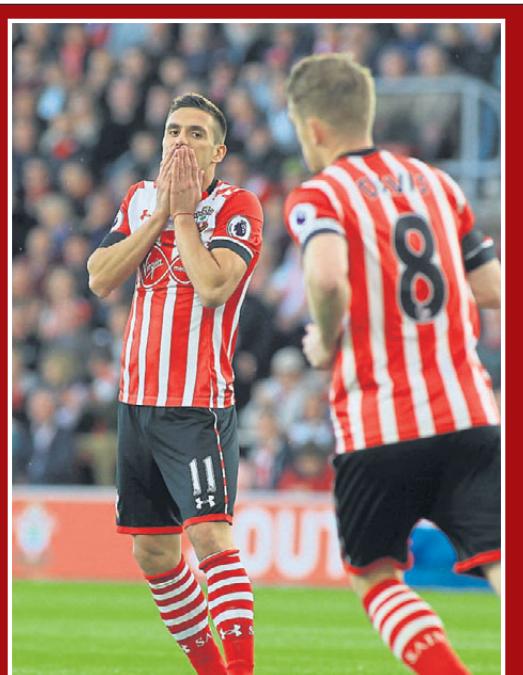
Cedric Soares and AFC Bournemouth's Dan Gosling battle for possession.



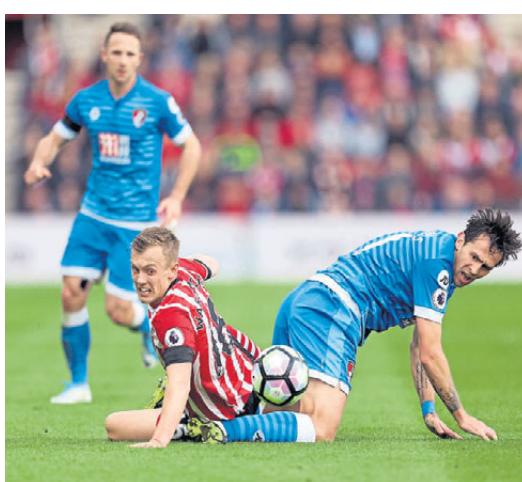
Saints fans outside St Mary's prior to the south coast derby.



Jay Rodriguez goes for goal and, right, Dusan Tadic's body language says it all as Saints miss a chance.



Camp Bestival organiser Rob Da Bank relaxes before the south coast derby.



James Ward-Prowse (left) and Charlie Daniels battle for the ball at St Mary's.

SAINTS V CHERRIES, PIC SPECIAL



Frustration shows on the face of Saints manager Claude Puel,



Jack Stephens, left, and James Ward-Prowse, right, in action against Cherries.



Conte: Title race is open

Antonio Conte admitted the Premier League title race is interesting again after his Chelsea side were beaten 2-1 by Crystal Palace. Chelsea's 13-game winning run at home came to a shuddering halt as Wilfried Zaha and Christian Benteke scored within three minutes after Cesc Fabregas had opened the scoring.

Chelsea are now seven points clear of second-placed Tottenham with nine games to play, beginning with Wednesday's clash with rivals Manchester City. Still they need 21 points to



Antonio Conte.

win the title.

"For sure, for you (the media) it's a good result, because (it) makes this more interesting in the championship," Conte said.

"But I always said the league finishes when you have the mathematical (certainty) that you won."

"Otherwise you must fight, you must play every game to try to win."

"In England it doesn't exist an easy game. Every game will be very tough, from now until the end, also if the team name is Manchester City or a team that is fighting for the relegation zone."

Palace boss Sam Allardyce opened his post-

match media conference saying: "That shocked you all, didn't it?"

Allardyce, whose side visited St Mary's on Wednesday, added: "It's an absolutely outstanding victory for us, particularly in the position we're in. Nobody expected it."

Allardyce then called on Zaha, who returned to Palace after a short and unhappy spell at Manchester United, to emulate Chelsea's Eden Hazard by being consistently excellent.

Zaha was subject of scrutiny over the international break, having rejected the chance to play for England in favour of the Ivory Coast, where he was born.

Allardyce said: "Wilf must feel really good about himself by his consistent performances at the moment."

"(Hazard's) ability is something Wilf could look at to try and match."

Asked if Zaha can realise his potential with the Eagles, Allardyce said: "He's already realising his potential now by the way he's playing. His potential's becoming a reality."

Chelsea were beaten for just the second time in 18 home games under Conte and conceded twice for the first time since the January 4 loss at Tottenham, despite having Hazard back following a calf injury.

There was an element of good fortune for Palace as Andros Townsend was fortunate not to concede a penalty when Pedro's shot struck his arm after just 17 minutes.

Conte added: "It's very difficult to see this situation. For sure something there was, but I think it's right also to accept the decision of the referee."

"We created many chances to score. We dominated."



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Ron rants at Reds bench

Everton boss Ronald Koeman accused the Liverpool bench of trying to get his players sent off after the Toofees were beaten 3-1 in the Merseyside derby.

Koeman accepted midfielder Ross Barkley might have been fortunate not to receive two yellow cards for poor challenges in the Anfield contest.

But he was not happy about what he saw as repeated protests from an unspecified member of the home coaching staff.

A lively contest was won by goals from Philippe Coutinho and Divock Origi after Matthew Pennington cancelled out Sadio Mane's early opener.

Koeman said: "Maybe you are right that he (Barkley) deserved two yellows for two tackles, but if I watch the Liverpool bench, and one Liverpool coach - not the manager but one of the coaches - the referee would have to show eight red cards to Everton.



Ronald Koeman

"Please behave a little bit more. Making that show, I don't like that."

Opposite number Jurgen Klopp did not want to be drawn into a row.

Klopp said: "It's a little bit difficult. It's like hearsay for me. He didn't say anything to me. My staff is fine, really good boys, involved in the game. They don't ask for anything that's not right. Sometimes we have tinted glasses - it's possible - but sometimes it's pretty clear."

Koeman was disappointed with a suggestion his side were slow to get going.

He said: "If you start with a question like that, we can stop."

"If I mention, as the manager of Everton, that I am really proud about my team, then your question is a different world. What pleased the manager is how we played today."

PINK NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Ex-Wessex star Harry: Joe's an inspiration



Harry Cornick.

CHERRIES winger Harry Cornick is drawing inspiration from team-mate Joe Quigley as the winger ramps up his return from the groin injury that has sabotaged his campaign.

Cornick penned a January deadline day loan deal with Gillingham - where Quigley has started five games after battling back from the serious knee injury he suffered in August - and last Saturday played the second half of the Gills' 1-0 defeat by Peterborough.

That was the latest step on the comeback trail for the 21-year-old, who ended his five-month exile by playing 50 minutes of Cherries' under-21s' 4-0 victory over Sampdoria a fortnight ago.

Cornick, who went under the knife in November, said: "It has been hard sitting in the treatment

room and watching the lads getting on and playing."

"Signing for Gillingham spurred me on, because it gave me something to look forward to. If I hadn't signed anywhere on loan I might not have got back as quickly as I have."

"I am so happy for Joe, we kept each other going when we were both injured."

"He was out for a bit longer than me, so seeing him go to Gillingham and play - and seeing him happy every day - has helped me a lot."

Cornick replaced Lys Mousset against Sampdoria and promptly embarked on a trademark flying run to lay on a goal for Mikael Ndjoli.

"I was feeling good, feeling fast and feeling strong," said Cornick. "The injury wasn't on my mind at

all."

Since joining Cherries from Wessex League Christchurch in 2013 Cornick's career has maintained its upwards curve.

He spent 2015-16 with League 2 Yeovil, scoring eight goals in 42 appearances.

And following a stint earlier this season with Yeovil's divisional counterparts, Leyton Orient, Cornick is taking another step up with League 1 Gillingham.

"The Sampdoria game was a chance for some of the young lads to try to catch the manager's eye," said Cornick. "Everyone's aim is to get into that first team."

"The plan for me is to keep climbing the Football League and see where I get to."

"I thought I did well at Orient and now I will see if I can do it in League One."

City looking for Craig's new No 2

By Wendy Gee



WINCHESTER City are on the lookout for an assistant to work alongside new manager Craig Davis.

Former Fleet Town boss Davis has initially been appointed until the end of the season after replacing Ian Saunders in the Denplan City Ground hotseat.

But the hope is he will stay in situ for the 2017/18 Southern One South & West campaign, supported by an experienced right-hand man.

Director of football Dave Malone explained: "Craig is going to be player-manager and we're talking to various people about coming in as No2."

"We've got a load of names on the list and we need someone with a bit of experience to run things from the sidelines when Craig's playing."

Davis's reign got off to unfortunate start last weekend when City slipped up 3-0 at home to Barnstaple Town.

It was their fourth straight South & West defeat, extending their winless league run to seven games, and Malone was keen to stop the rot at Paulton Rovers today.

Although it won't make a great



Craig Davis

deal of difference to their mid-table league position, the club need to get some momentum going in

down, but we're looking for a performance from the team and from individuals," said Malone.

"It was almost like we were going through the motions but now, with new manager, we've got the rationale to look more closely at what we're doing."

While disappointed to begin his Abbotts Barton era on a losing note, Chandler's Ford-based Davis said he had already "learnt plenty" about his new charges.

"It was not the start we wanted, but I'm not going to lose too much sleep over it," he confessed.

"Sometimes you learn a lot about players in adversity and I've already learnt plenty."

With the transfer deadline having already passed, Davis's hands are tied as far as making squad additions is concerned.

"It's hard when you can't add players to the squad to freshen it up, which is probably what it needs, but we're working on a formation and a shape and are having a look at players with a view to next season," said the former Bashley, Salisbury and AFC Totton midfielder.

"As a player, I was in teams that won leagues and I want to build a team that will challenge at the top."

"I think I've got the ability to do that at Winchester. There's a great infrastructure and great people here and I'm excited about the challenge."

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

AFC TOTTON 1 BIDEFORD 1 (ABANDONED, HT)

Stags fall victim to April showers!

By Wendy Gee



A mighty downpour saturated the Testwood Stadium surface before AFC Totton's home Southern League clash with Bideford.

But, despite creating puddles galore, referee Philip Staynings gave the game the go ahead - only to then abandon it at half-time with the score 1-1.

The rain was still belting down as action got underway with Bideford keeper Joe Moore instantly struggling to keep his footing under pressure from Nathaniel Sherborne.

Alfy Whittingham's header from a corner was cleared by defender Steve Reed from inside a soggy six-yard box.

With the ball holding-up in the vast areas of standing water, it looked as if good football would be out of the question.

But Totton midfielder Charlie GUNSON soon disproved that theory with a brilliant individual opener just five minutes in.

Taking possession just outside the area, he hit through both the puddles and the Bideford defence before slotting a nicely weighted shot past Moore.

Although the slap-stick nature of proceedings provided top-notch entertainment for the crowd, Reed might not have seen the funny side had he injured himself sliding into the fence alongside the Totton dug-out and soaking Stags boss Louis Langdown in the process.

Under the circumstances, both teams played sensibly, keeping strong tackles to a minimum, but referee Staynings was seriously unimpressed when Totton's combative midfielder Neil Williams put in a high challenge on keeper Moore.

Williams' yellow card came with a stern warning not to do it again.

The rain briefly relented, but when the heavens opened once again and, with the stand side of the pitch now resembling a river, you couldn't help but wonder how long it would continue.

But continue it did and on 39 minutes it was Bideford's turn to use the conditions in their favour and make it 1-1.

Totton failed to clear the ball from inside their area and DOWNING swiftly intervened to steer the ball past Pat O'Flaherty in the home goal.

Staynings blew the whistle promptly on 45 minutes and, following consultation with both managers, the match was sensibly abandoned.

AFC Totton boss Louis Langdown felt Staynings made a sensible decision.

"It was just one of those freak things," he said. "It kept looking like the rain would clear up, but then it just chucked it down again. Both sets of players took it in the right spirit and looked after themselves out there and there will be some comedy video moments to look back on."

"The referee tried to get the game on



Bideford's Steve Reed slides off the pitch towards the Totton dugout. Pictures by Chris Moorhouse.



Totton's Neil Williams in the thick of the midfield puddles. Right - the AFC Totton dugout at half-time.



A Totton fan shelters from the downpours while Charlie Gunson, above, fires Totton into an early lead,

for the right reasons but, in the end, he had done the right thing abandoning it.

"No-one is injured and we've got some young players with careers to think

about."

The abandonment means Bideford must make the long journey from Devon again on a Tuesday night. "No-one wanted that



and I wouldn't wish that midweek journey on our worst enemies," said Langdown. "But our lads would rather play than train - as long as it's at home."

Spitfires are thrashed

EASTLEIGH's four-game unbeaten run in the National League was rudely halted by a 4-0 drubbing at lofty Dagenham & Redbridge.

The game was as good as over for the Spitfires after conceding three goals in the opening 31 minutes.

Corry Whitely scored twice and Paul Benson once - with Eastleigh boss Richard Hill responding by taking off two of his defenders, Ado Obileye and Michael Green, before the break.

Whitely hit the woodwork shortly into the second half before Craig McAllister did likewise for the visitors.

Whitely was not be denied his hat-trick, though, converting a penalty after Gavin Hoyte was penalised for a foul.



Abdulai Baggio, left.

"Today was one of those games where the performance just wasn't good enough," stated Hill afterwards.

● New Winchester City boss Craig Davis suffered his second successive league defeat this weekend.

After watching his men lose 3-0 at home to Barnstaple last week, City went down 2-0 at Paulton Rovers.

City keeper Lewis Noice saved an early Elliott Gibbons penalty, but Mario Mateus went on to net in the 39th and 81st minutes.

● Abdulai Baggio and Will Spetch netted as Poole Town took another big step towards reaching the National League South play-offs with a 2-1 home win over Concord Rangers.

The game, which was pay what you want, attracted a crowd of 737.

Concord ended with ten men after Taylor Miles was shown a straight red for a reckless tackle on Baggio.

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Date set for cup final

THE date and venue have been set for the 2016/17 Sydenhams Wessex League Cup final.

Sholing will do battle with Baffins Milton Rovers at AFC Portchester's Blanchard Wells Stadium on Monday, May 1 (3pm).

Dave Diaper's Sholing overcame holders Team Solent 2-0 to reach the final, while Baffins won the all-Sydenhams One showdown with Shaftesbury 3-2.

Entry at Portchester will be £7 adults and £4 senior citizens/children (under-16s), including programme.

● CHELSEA legend Ron 'Chopper' Harris will be entertaining guests at Amesbury Town's sporting dinner next month.

The 72-year-old former Blues skipper has a wealth of tales to tell,



Ron Harris

having signed for South Londoners in 1961.

Over 21 years the tough-tackling defender won the European Cup Winners' Cup, FA Cup and Football League Cup during a golden era at Stamford Bridge.

The night with Harris at Bonnymead Park takes place on Saturday, April 8. Tickets cost £15 to include entry to Amesbury's league match with Fawley AFC that day.

Contact amesburytownfc@gmail.com for details.

● WEYMOUTH and Gillingham Town will once again lock horns in this year's Dorset Senior Cup final.

The two sides, who faced off in the climax of last season's competition, are set to do it again at the home of Dorchester Town on Tuesday, April 11 (7.45pm).

'Piegate' keeper Shaw signs for Rangers

Wayne Shaw

WAYNE Shaw – arguably Britain's most high-profile goalkeeper – will be taking time out to support a good cause later this month.

He will be guesting for Glasgow Rangers in a fund-raising 'Legends' match against Portsmouth on Easter Monday.

Totton-based Shaw became the talk of the nation when he was caught on camera wolfing down a pie in the middle of Sutton United's televised FA Cup clash with Arsenal.

The former Eastleigh and AFC

Totton stopper subsequently left the Gander Green Lane club after the Gambling Commission and the FA launched an investigation into the pie-eating stunt.

But the big man is still smiling and looking forward to being part of the action at AFC Portchester's Blanchard Wells Stadium on April 17 (2pm) for the Rangers v Pompey Legends Match.

The sides will be playing for the Lee Rigby Memorial Cup in memory of British Army soldier Fusilier Lee Rigby, who was attacked and killed near the Royal

Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, London, in May 2013.

Among the Rangers players taking part are Andy Goram, John Brown, Mark Walters, Charlie Miller, Terry Butcher, Gordon Durie, Marco Negri and Romsey-born Nigel Spackman.

AFC Portchester are in need of help with traffic management, litter picking and general stewarding on the day.

If you are able to help, please contact club chairman Paul Kelly by email (chairman@afcportchester.co.uk).

Brock aiming to find more gems

By Wendy Gee



BROCKENHURST are looking to unearth some more young gems when they hold under-18 trials this month.

Their current U18 side, only set up this season, sit top of the Hampshire Youth League Division Two.

Whether they end the campaign as champions depends on their final game at Grigg Lane tomorrow (April 2, 2pm).

If they win, the crown is theirs.

Lose or draw and it hands the advantage to tomorrow's second-placed opponents Fareham Town Red, who could yet overtake them with one last game to play against Winchester City.

Brock's U18 trials for the 2017/18 season will be held at Grigg Lane on Sundays April 9 and 23, starting at 11am both days.

First team, development team and under-18 management will all be involved in keeping with Brock's 'one club' philosophy.

The aim is for teenage talent to progress to the Badgers' development squad, playing in the Weyvern Combination League, and then on to the first team in the Sydenhams Wessex Premier Division.

"We are inviting any players who are interested in playing for a progressive club to attend the trials," said Brock's development manager Paul Nineham.

"The current 2016/17 season has been highly productive in the league and player progression as 15 U18 players also played for the development squad and four U18



Brockenhurst's under-15s (pic Hampshire FA). Below - Noel McCarthy-Gardiner (pic digitalsportsphoto.com)

players played for the first team. It proves they do actively progress on into the senior sides."

No one exemplifies that more than exciting, young forward Noel McCarthy-Gardiner.

Since joining Brock from New Milton U16s in the summer, he has made 33 appearances for Pat McManus's first team - nine of them starts.

Brock's U18s will play their home fixtures on the main pitch at Grigg Lane, competing in the Hampshire Youth League, the FA Youth Cup, Hampshire U18 Cup, League Cup and Midweek Floodlit Cup.

All three management teams will be working together through

out the season following players' progression," added Nineham.

"Winter training will be at Brockenhurst College on their 3G astro, twice a week."

Players should register their interest by e-mail to louiessilvani@hotmail.co.uk, listing their name, address, date of birth and preferred position.

Tomorrow is also a big day for Brockenhurst's under-15s who will be looking to lift their second trophy this season.

Having won the Hampshire FA Under-15 Cup by beating Totton & Eling 5-2, they are in another final tomorrow against Bournemouth Electric in the Allen Paull Trophy.



PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Lymo boss Lewis plants tongue in cheek

DAVE Lewis had his tongue planted firmly in his cheek when he complimented Bashley striker Kabba Jack following last week's New Forest derby.

Lewis's Lymington Town had young Eastleigh loanee Owen Fee sent off on an afternoon when he felt refereeing decisions were erratic to say the least.

Diminutive Bashley striker Jack earned free-kicks time and time again, towered over by Lymington's defensive titan Ross Bottomley.

But, according to Town boss Lewis, the same did not apply at the other end of the pitch.

He said: "I have to say fair play to Kabba Jack.

"If a player keeps throwing himself on the floor and the referee keeps giving him free-kicks, then fair play to him for keep doing it."

"We had Ashley Jarvis making his debut and he got man-handled and pushed all game, yet he didn't get a single free

kick. It's amazing, isn't it? Their two centre-halves didn't once infringe the rules in 90 minutes of football.

"Meanwhile we picked up five bookings and the club has woken up this week to a £160 fine."

Lewi Brailey's second-half free-kick settled the derby in Bashley's favour, but Lewis says his quibbles with the refereeing had nothing to do with the result.

"We lost 1-0 and I'm not blaming the referee at all for that," he insisted.

Spectacle

"We missed a penalty and twice had goals ruled out for offside – one of which wasn't – but we created enough chances to have overcome those mistakes.

"We limited Bashley to one chance in 90 minutes and they're scored from it."

"Our lads played really well and controlled most of the

game, but it's been ruined as a spectacle after 40 minutes when Owen's been sent off."

For all his misgivings about the game, Lewis – a former Bashley player – enjoyed returning to his old stamping ground.

"It's the first time I've been back there competitively and there's a real good feel about the club," he said.

"There were 240 people there and there was a bit of a buzz about the ground."

Jack was Bashley's match-winning hero on Tuesday as Tom Prodomo's men reeled off their fourth straight victory at the 3-2 expense of Team Solent.

Dan Munday twice put the Foresters ahead only for Jemal Wiseman and Pip Nolan to nullify his good work.

The winner arrived on 69 minutes when Brailey sent Hugh Dathan flying down the wing and his cross was tucked away by Bashley's resident Jack-in-the-box.

Eastleigh loanees Fee hard done by

By Wendy Gee



ers will soon identify what the ref sees as infringements and adjust their game accordingly, applying what has gone before.

"Owen was on the receiving end of a couple of tackles that he's not retaliated to and then he gets sent off after 40 minutes.

"Owen's first 'foul' was innocuous, half a foul at most, and while I've seen people booked for the second one, a Bashley player made the same tackle just before it and didn't get booked.

"I feel for Owen, I really do," added Lewis.

"He's a good young prospect and he's getting targeted by people kicking him."

"He's a robust lad with a great attitude and we don't ask for special treatment for him, but I want to come out in his defence and say he did not deserve to get sent off."

What worries Lewis is what the likes of Eastleigh, Fee's parent club, will make of it all.

"These young lads are put out on loan but, when this sort of thing happens, how long will clubs continue to let them out on loan?" he asked.

"Who will suffer? The answer is, everyone will."

"As a coach, what do I say to Owen? I could tell him not to put his foot in, but that's incorrect because you've got to compete."

"He's a 17-year-old lad making his way in football. In the cold light of day he'll evaluate this and see what he can learn from it."

LYMINGTON Town boss Dave Lewis has rushed to the defence of young on-loan Eastleigh winger Owen Fee.

The 17-year-old Spitfires academy prospect found himself on the end of some poor tackles in the New Forest derby at Bashley last Saturday, one of which resulted in a penalty for his side.

But in an ironic twist, it was the young man himself who ended up in the proverbial doghouse, sent off by referee Christopher Arkless for two alleged yellow card offences in as many minutes shortly before half-time.

Lewis insists Fee's dismissal was grossly unfair in the context of what had gone before and is concerned about the mixed messages it sends out to youngsters learning the game.

He said: "Owen's been brought down for a penalty, which we happened to miss, and the Bashley player didn't get booked."

"Then Owen's been scythed down by a rash challenge and the referee spoke to their lad and didn't book him."

"At the time, I thought 'fair enough, the ref's applying some common sense', but then Owen's made two tackles, been booked for both and sent off."

"Each referee has different interpretations of the laws of the game and good play-



Owen Fee

Jamie back at Totton

POPULAR goalkeeping coach Jamie Cotton is back in the AFC Totton fold after parting company with Winchester City.

Cotton initially joined the Stags in the summer of 2015 as part of a new backroom team recruited by then manager Steve Hollick.

From Totton, the former Lymington Town and Hythe & Dibden man moved on to Petersfield Town where he worked in tandem with Ian Saunders, who then took him to Winchester.

Out of loyalty to Saunders, who was sacked last week, Cotton parted company with the Citizens and was welcomed back by Southern One South & West rivals Totton with open arms.

Cotton and Totton boss Louis Langdown go back



Jamie Cotton

years, having played youth football together for Winsor and been part of the same Eastleigh rep side.

Langdown said: "We've always wanted to get a goalkeeping coach in."

"Simon Arthur (2004 FA Vase winner with Winchester) is usually my go-to man on goalkeeping issues and we tried to get him to Totton but, for various reasons, he couldn't do it."

"So when Jamie became available it was a no-brainer to call him. He's a good character and we know his personality."

"Winchester were keen to keep him but, because of his loyalty to Sus (Saunders), Jamie saw it as time to get out."

"He either had to go with Sus or find pastures new and he's champing at the bit to be back with Totton."

"He's happy to come home!"

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Connor a cup winner

AFC TOTTON'S latest defensive gem loaned from AFC Bournemouth is an EFL Youth Alliance Cup winner.

Right-back Connor York was part of the Cherries' under-18 side that lifted the regional trophy with a 2-1 win over Luton Town at the Vitality Stadium.

All the goals were crammed into the first half as Bournemouth's young guns bounced back from behind through Jaidon Anthony and Charlie Seaman.

Victory was no less than Carl Fletcher's side deserved in front of a 1,400-strong crowd, swelled by an enthusiastic contingent of York supporters from AFC Totton.

"The whole squad went down to watch Connor



Connor York.

and he really appreciated the support," said Totton boss Louis Langdown, who signed York on work experience terms in November.

"He's been with us for over 20 games now, so he's one of us.

"Connor's a good footballer.

"Hopefully the exposure he's got playing for us and how well he's done for us will convince Bournemouth that he deserves at least another year.

"It will be great for him and great for us if he gets it."

York was involved for Bournemouth again on Tuesday, this time helping Mark Molesley's under-21s to a 4-1 win over Peterborough in the Central League.

Star of the show was hat-trick man Sam Surridge, who caught the eye earlier this season on loan at Poole Town.

Wright now level with Bennett on 41 goals



Tommy Wright

TOMMY Wright has drawn level with fellow sharpshooter Justin Bennett at the top of Salisbury's goal charts.

The former Otterbourne striker, on a season-long loan from Sutton United, hit a hat-trick as the Whites climbed to fourth in the Southern One South & West with a 7-0 midweek slaying of rock-bottom Bridgwater Town.

It moves him onto 41 league and cup goals, level with Bennett who is currently sidelined with a hamstring injury.

Joining Wright on the

scoresheet against Bridgwater were Eddie Perrett (2), Lewis Benson and Tom Wheeler.

The landslide victory moved Salisbury to within a point of third-placed Tiverton with five games to play.

Tuesday's seven-goal romp was just the tonic Salisbury needed following last Saturday's 4-0 home defeat by newly-crowned champions Hereford.

The club's two new signings, Franklyn Clarke and Jesse Waller-Lassen, made 90-minute debuts that day.

Waller-Lassen has joined the Whites on dual registration from Team Solent and ex-Blackfield & Langley man Clarke left Southern Premier outfit Dorchester Town last week.

"I was really pleased with both of them," said boss Steve Clarke.

"I thought Jesse was lively and you can see his quality.

"Franklyn got about the pitch and made some tackles which is everything we are looking for in a midfielder."

Salisbury police chief hits out

By Wendy Gee



SALISBURY'S police chief condemned the "irresponsible" actions of a "small minority" of troublemakers in the build-up to last Saturday's Southern One South & West showdown champions elect Hereford.

Inspector Pete Sparrow denounced the ugly scenes witnessed in the city centre prior to the game, which ended 4-0 to the Bulls in front of a 1,807 Ray Mac crowd.

He said: "While the football game itself passed without any problems inside the ground, there were a number of individuals who were intent on causing issues within the city prior to the game.

"We believe these issues were instigated by local people loosely associated to Salisbury FC and responded to by a minority of fans who had travelled to the city to support Hereford FC.

"Two males from Salisbury were dealt with by police after bottles and glasses and glass ashtrays were thrown into St Edmund's Church Street and Salt Lane from the Five Bells pub – a 22-year-old was arrested and released with no further action following interview and further enquiries, and a number of people, including a 17-year-old, were dispersed from the city for a period of 12 hours with a Section 35 order.

"It is really, really disappointing to see the behaviour of a small minority despite an increased police presence and extra safety stewards at the ground.



Police presence in Salisbury city centre prior to the Hereford game.

"Those people involved cannot be described as fans of football and it is a shame that a match, that started with a minute's silence to mark the earlier tragic events of the week and finished with the crowning of Hereford FC as champions of the league, could not be matched by dignified behaviour within the city.

"Our investigation into Saturday's behaviour is continuing – we will be extensively analysing all bodycam footage in a bid to identify those responsible.

"Once identified, we will enter

discussions with Salisbury FC, whose name they represent, and take steps to ban them from future games.

"These people cannot expect to act in such an irresponsible way and continue to be allowed to attend fixtures alongside true football fans."

Salisbury responded with the following statement: "Salisbury Football Club is most concerned to hear of incidents that took place in city centre on Saturday ahead of our match with Hereford FC.

"We were very happy with the way the match was handled in conjunction with Wiltshire Police, but sad to hear of events elsewhere.

"We will continue to work with Wiltshire Police and will act upon whatever feedback they give us.

"We were delighted with the attendance at the game and magnificent support provided by our fans, and those involved or responsible for the issues in city centre on Saturday in no way represent our fan base."

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Holmes to stay on as Wimborne manager



Matty Holmes

MATTY Holmes has agreed terms to remain as boss of Southern One South & West outfit Wimborne Town for another 12 months.

Holmes's current deal was due to expire at the end of this season but has been renewed and extended to keep him at Cuthbury for a second campaign.

He will be paid a part-time salary for his managerial duties while continuing to work for the Magpies in separate coaching and community roles.

"We're trying to build something for the future and I am really looking forward to being here next season," smiled Holmes.

"There are a lot of exciting things going on."

The manager celebrated his new contract

by signing ex-AFC Totton defender Matt Oldring from Southern Premier outfit Dorchester.

Former Cherries goalkeeper Chad Collins has also joined on terms until the end of the season, with fellow stopper Alan Walker-Harris switching to Slough Town.

Winger Jamie Davidson, meanwhile, has joined Wimborne to sign for Hamworthy Recreation.

"Matt Oldring was a target for us for next season but he became available and I'm delighted we have got him," said Holmes of the centre-half, who was released by Cherries in 2010.

"He has great experience for a 24-year-old and that is a great coup for us."

Oldring made an impressive debut last Saturday as Wimborne stunned play-off chasing Tiverton 1-0 at Cuthbury thanks to Toby Holmes' 42nd-minute winner.

Coach Shane Traynor explained: "We changed to a 3-5-2 system because we wanted to match Tiverton man-for-man.

"We thought that bringing Matty Oldring into the side gave us a great opportunity to play like that - and the game plan worked.

"He was fantastic and brings a wealth of experience.

"We've been missing Scott Arnold for so long, so it was nice to have somebody to come in and dictate the game.

"Matty reads the game so well and the younger lads will learn so much from him."

NON LEAGUE FIXTURES

Monday, April 3
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE
Lincoln v Dagenham & Redbridge (BT Sport 1, 7.45).

Tuesday, April 4
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Southport v Macclesfield, Tramere v Sutton, York v Bromley.

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

Poole Town v Hungerford.

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Premier Division: Hayes & Yeading v Cinderford.

Division One South & West: North Leigh v Barnstaple, Shortwood v Mangotsfield.

NORTH HANTS SENIOR CUP FINAL

Fleet Town v Tadley Calleva (at Basildon Town FC).

SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Premier Division: Basingley v Alresford, Bournemouth Poppies v Team Solent,

Cowes Sports v Brockenhurst, Hordean v AFC Portchester, Newport Iow v Blackfield & Langley.

Division One: US Portsmouth v Romsey Town.

PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE PREMIER LEAGUE

Premier Division: Hayling Utd v Hedge End Rangers (7.30), Stockbridge v Bush Hill.

Wednesday, April 5
PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE PREMIER LEAGUE

Premier Division: Liss Athletic v Paulsgrove.

NORTH HANTS INTERMEDIATE CUP FINAL

Four Marks v South Wonston Swifts (at Whitchurch Utd FC).

SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Division One: Andover New Street v Hamble Club, Hythe & Dibden v Pewsey Vale.

Saturday, April 8
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Aldershot v Torquay, Barrow v Woking, Braintree v Dover, Bromley v Wrexham,

Chester v York, Eastleigh v Lincoln, Galeshead v Maidstone, Guiseley v Forest Green, Macclesfield v Dagenham & Redbridge, North Ferriby v Boreham Wood, Sutton v Southport, Tramore v Solihull Moors.

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH

Chelmsford v Poole Town, Concord Rangers v Bath City, Darford v Eastbourne Borough, Maldenhead v East Thurrock,

Oxford City v Hampton & Richmond, St Albans v Margate, Truro v Ebbsfleet, Welling v Gosport Borough, Weston-super-Mare v Bishops Stortford, Whitehawk v Hungerford.

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Premier Division: Chesham v Biggleswade, Cinderford v Banbury,

Cirencester v Cambridge City, Dorchester v King's Lynn, Frome v Dunstable, Hayes & Yeading v Stratford, Hitchin v Chippenham, Kettering v Slough, Leamington v Kings Langley, Redditch v Basingstoke, St Ives v Weymouth, St Neots v Merthyr Town.

Division One South & West: Barnstaple v AFC Totton, Bishop's Cleeve v Bridgwater, Didcot v Wimborne, Evesham v Mangotsfield, Paullton v Shortwood, Salisbury v Wantage, Slimbridge v Bideford, Swindon Supermarine v Tiverton, Taunton v Hereford, Winchester City v Larkhall, Yate v North Leigh.

SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Premier Division: Amesbury v Fawley, Blackfield & Langley v Brockenhurst,

Cowes Sports v Andover Town, Farham v Alresford, Hamworthy v AFC Portchester, Hordean v Bournemouth Poppies, Lympstone v Newport Iow, Moneyfields v Whitchurch, Portland v Sholing, Team Solent v Bemerton HH, Verwood v Basingstoke.

Division One: Christchurch v Tadley Calleva, Downton v Hythe & Dibden, East Cowes Vics v Fleet Spurs, Hamble Club v Alton, Laverstock & Ford v US Portsmouth, Ringwood v AFC Stoneham, Romsey Town v Baffins MR, Shafesbury v Folland Sports, Totton & Elring v Pewsey Vale, Weymouth Res v Andover NS.

HAMPSHIRE INTERMEDIATE CUP FINAL

Locks Heath v Whitecroft & Barton Sports (at AFC Portchester, 3.30).

PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE PREMIER LEAGUE

Premier Division: Bush Hill v Hayling Utd, Clarendon v Paulsgrove, Fleetlands v Stockbridge, Hedge End Rangers v Liphook, QO Southampton v Winchester Castle.

Division One: Four Marks v AFC Petersfield, Upton v Netley Central.

Combination: Winchester Castle v Bush Hill.



Luke Roberts, left, in action for Poole.

terms of that.

"But I know this level and have seen an awful lot of non-League players, some of whom have gone on and played in the league. I am very surprised Luke Roberts is not in that bracket."

A home-grown AFC Totton talent, Roberts, whose brother Taz plays for Winchester City, was voted Stags' supporters' player-of-

the-season in 2013/14.

He signed for Poole that summer having impressed for the Dorset side in pre-season friendlies against Hamworthy and Gosport.

Last Saturday Roberts proved his value to the side yet again as he headed in a priceless 77th-minute winner at Oxford City, strengthening Poole's grip on fifth spot.

After the game, Killick gave high praise to another ex-Totton player, defender Jamie Whisker.

"If I was writing a list of marks for players, I could give Jamie Whisker an eight before the game started and I'd know it would not be lower," he said.

"He is just such a consistent, proper player. He is the captain and a leader of men."

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Floodlight catches fire

BEMERTON Heath Harlequins' cup tie at Shrewton United was abandoned after one of the floodlights caught fire.

The teams were competing in the Salisbury Hospital Cup semi-final at The Hollow, Shrewton when the incident occurred.

After Scott Joyce had missed a penalty in the 75th minute when it was 0-0, smoke was coming out of the floodlight.

Two fire crews arrived at the scene and used a carbon dioxide extinguisher to put it out.

Bemerton boss Graham Kemp said: "I've been in football a long time and haven't seen a floodlight catch fire like that before.

"It was already quite dark as two bulbs weren't working properly."

No one was injured.



Graham Kemp

Kemp added: "I'm presuming the rearranged fixture will be at ours as Shrewton have quite a serious problem with their floodlights. The never-ending season continues..."

Roberts at the double

Salisbury FC made it 10 goals for and none against in five days with a 3-0 Southern League Division 1 (South & West) win at Shortwood United this weekend. Taurean Roberts opened the scoring after just three minutes and Tommy Wright, with his 42nd goal of the season, doubled the advantage five minutes into the second half for a Salisbury side who had crushed Bridgwater 7-0 last Tuesday.

Roberts added a third on 65 minutes.

Garrett becomes second left back to leave

TYLER Garratt has returned to Doncaster Rovers following a loan spell with National League outfit Eastleigh.

Garratt made 11 appearances for the Spittires, having been signed by former manager Martin Allen in December, and scored his first senior goal in the 1-1 draw at Sutton United in January.

The 20-year-old, who joined Doncaster from Bolton Wanderers last summer, will be available for the run-in as table-topping Donny

chase promotion from League Two.

Garratt is the second left-back to have part ed company with the Spittires since Richard Hill returned to the Silverlake as director of football/caretaker manager.

Sam Muggleton, another of Allen's signings, has joined National League rivals York City on a deal until the end of the season.

Eastleigh's first move after announcing Hill's return was to bring back the long-serv ing Michael Green who had been allowed to

leave two weeks previously by Allen.

Fans' favourite Green is first-choice left-back again and the club still have young pair Chinua Cole and Jack Masterton as back-up.

Cole, another of Allen's signings, is on contract at the Silverlake and it made financial sense for Garratt to return to Doncaster.

"We wouldn't have had Tyler for next season and, if I'd played him, it would have been standing in the way of Chinua's development," said Hill.

Sam makes great impact for York

By Wendy Gee



LONG-THROW phenomenon Sam Muggleton has made an instant impression on York City fans.

The former Eastleigh left-back staggered the Bootham Crescent faithful when a 40-yard missile out of his hands landed on the head of Jon Parkin to secure a 5-3 victory over Southport on his Minstermen debut.

The 21-year-old defender, who recently parted company with the Spittires, said: "I've never had the throws measured, but Martin Allen, who was my manager at Gillingham, Barnet and Eastleigh, always told me to use what I've got and it does create problems.

"It's a massive part of my career and always will be for as long as I'm playing."

Having started out at Leicester City's academy, Muggleton became an apprentice at Gillingham and later followed Allen to Barnet where he racked up 16 appearances in the Bees' 2014/15 National League title-winning campaign.

He linked up with Allen again at Eastleigh in January but was limited to just five Spittires outings before Allen got the chop in February after just 84 days in charge.

York have since snapped the youngster up on a deal until the end of the season and Muggleton says he is shocked at how high the morale is even though the Bootham Crescent outfit are at the wrong end of the National League table.

He told The Pink's sister paper The York Press: "At Eastleigh there were a lot of coming and goings and my confidence had dropped a bit because I didn't play much."

"But this seems like the happiest



Sam Muggleton, left, in action for Eastleigh.

est squad I've ever seen, which is great because I believe the squad have to be as close as possible.

"I had that when we won this league with Barnet and it's the same here.

"Eastleigh just didn't want me, I don't think," he added. "They had quite a few left-backs and it didn't quite work out there."

"This is now a new test in a big

city at a big club who were unfortunately relegated last season (from League Two). It's a good challenge for me to try and help keep the club up now."

● EASTLEIGH have signed 17-year-old goalkeeper Nick Hall on a work experience loan from Portsmouth until the end of the season.

The youngster will provide cover for experienced Spittires duo Graham Stack and Ryan Clarke.

Their own young goalkeeping prospect, Mark Childs, is out with a long-term knee injury sustained on loan at Gosport Borough.

Hall played against Eastleigh's under-18s earlier in the season in an FA Youth Cup tie which Portsmouth won 5-0.

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Fiona backs her Priory management pair

CHRISTCHURCH chairperson Fiona Clements has backed management duo Ollie Cherrett and Chris Hart.

The Hurn Bridge outfit went into this weekend's game with lowly Pewsey Vale two points off the third and final automatic promotion spot in Sydenham's Wessex One.

However, speculation has been rife the club will part company with the pair if Priory fail to win back the Premier status they surrendered in 2015.

The rumour mill gathered pace when Christchurch embarked on a recent five-

match winless run.

Clements said: "I just want to put the rumours to bed. Christchurch FC is fully behind Ollie Cherrett and Chris Hart."

"As far as the club is concerned, it has always been a five-year plan with Ollie and Chris. There was never any pressure towards them about promotion and we have always known we were building for the future."

Cherrett and Hart took the reins in September 2015 after the club had parted company with former boss Adie Arnold.

They steadied the ship following a disas-

trous start to 2015-16 with Priory eventually finishing sixth.

A 13-match unbeaten run between the end of October and the start of February, which included 10 wins, had them in the hunt this season before the blip.

But with teams above them also faltering, Christchurch's hopes were reignited after their 4-2 win over Fleet last weekend.

Clements added: "They have done a really good job with injuries to key players at a key time. The injuries were to goalscorers and they are starting to come back now."

Cargill delight at Stags loan spell

By Wendy Gee



AFC BOURNEMOUTH's Winchester-born defender Baily Cargill believes a loan spell at AFC Totton was a launchpad for his professional career.

The former Saints academy man, 21, joined the Cherries from St Mary's in 2008 and went out to the Testwood Stadium to gain experience in 2012/13, winning Totton's player-of-the-year award along the way.

Cargill recalled: "I was at AFC Totton as a second-year scholar and that really put me in the right direction. I was really nervous when I first went there. I felt like I was playing in the Premier League! It was completely different to anything I had been used to."

"I was going up against players who had played at that level for a long time and they knew how to play in that league so I had to learn quickly and I think I did."

"It probably wasn't the most important loan in terms of the technical side of football, but for me to become a bit more physical and learn the game that way, it was a very good loan. I played a lot and learned a lot."

Cargill was originally at Leicester City's academy, but joined the youth programme at Saints for two years from 2006-2008.

He had a season ticket at St Mary's and celebrated on the pitch when Saints were promoted back to the Premier League in 2012. He and his family are all Saints supporters.

The defender has had loan spells at Welling United, Torquay, Coventry and has been at Gillingham this season, making ten appearances.



Baily Cargill in his AFC Totton days.

Now back at Cherries, he is looking to make further strides forward after recently making his Premier League debut at Manchester United.

Encouraging others to take the non-League route, Cargill said: "Under-21s football is completely

different to men's football and profootball."

"Even if you are going on loan to somewhere like AFC Totton, it's probably more worthwhile than playing an under-18s or under-21s game because they are not as physical or taxing."

"I would definitely say to anyone of my age or younger who wanted to get experience, to go out on loan."

"I've played in front of 100 people at Totton and played in front of 75,000 at Old Trafford, so it's been a big road for me."

Killick: I'm so grateful

TOM KILLLICK feels Poole Town's escape from demotion means the break-up of his team has been narrowly avoided.

Poole were effectively given the green light to remain in National South following the visit of FA officials to the Black Gold Stadium this week.

Dolphins, who have earned four promotions under Killick, had been in danger of returning to the Southern League but managed to upgrade their facilities prior to the March 31 deadline.

Killick said: "I feel great gratitude towards the board of directors because we would have been looking at the break-up of the whole team had we been relegated."

"The players deserve to be in this league and some



Tommy Killick.

of them deserve to be in the league above, so you wouldn't have expected them to hang around."

"That would have been devastating for me and the club but, thankfully, we have avoided that."

Meanwhile, supporters were what they want for entry against Concord Rangers this weekend - the club's aim being to attract as many fans as possible following the substantial upgrade works, which included installing low-level terracing, repositioning a floodlight and putting in additional turnstiles.

Killick said: "Our crowds have increased reasonably this year but to sustain this level of football without a sugar daddy pumping in lots of money, you need greater attendances than we have got. Hopefully, people will turn out in numbers because the effort has come at huge financial cost."

County ins and outs

DERBYSHIRE

Ins: Matt Henry (T20 Blast), Jeevan Mendis (until June), Imran Tahir (June onwards), Gary Wilson (Surrey), Luis Reece (Lancashire), Hardus Viljoen (Kent), Daryn Smit (Kolpak)

Outs: Callum Parkinson (Leicestershire), Chesney Hughes (released), Wes Durston, Harry White, Neil Broom

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 1st (Div 2). 2013 - 8th (Div 1). 2014 - 4th (Div 2). 2015 - 8th. 2016 - 9th.

T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

DURHAM

Ins: Cameron Steel (Middlesex), Stephen Cook, Tom Latham.

Outs: Scott Borthwick (Surrey), Mark Stoneman (Surrey), Asher Hart (Hampshire), Gordon Muchall (retired), Phil Mustard (Gloucestershire), Jamie Harrison, Calum MacLeod, Gurman Randhawa (all released)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 6th (Div 1). 2013 - 1st. 2014 - 5th. 2015 - 4th. 2016 - 4th (relegated for financial reasons).

T20 Blast: 2012 - 2012 - Group



Asher Hart.

stage. 2013 - QF. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Runners-up.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Winners. 2015 - QF. 2016 - Group stage.

ESSEX

Ins: Varun Chopra (Warwickshire), Adam Wheater (Hampshire), Simon Harmer (Kolpak), Mohammad Amir, Neil Wagner (Lancashire)

Outs: Graham Napier, David Masters (both retired), Jaik Mickleburgh, Tom Moore (both released)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 5th (Div 2). 2013 - 3rd. 2014 - 3rd. 2015 - 3rd. 2016 - 1st.

T20 Blast: 2012 - QF. 2013 - SF. 2014 - QF. 2015 - QF. 2016 - QF.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - QF. 2015 - QF. 2016 - QF.

GLAMORGAN

Ins: Jacques Rudolph

Outs: James Kettleborough, Dewi Penrhyn Jones (both released), Mark Wallace (retired)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 6th (Div 2). 2013 - 8th. 2014 - 8th. 2015 - 4th. 2016 - 8th.

Continued on facing page

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

Raising hopes of

By Simon Walter



IT is 44 years since Hampshire last won the County Championship, but with what looks their strongest squad for a decade in place they have raised hopes of a challenge at the top end of the table.

The bookies have Hampshire down as third favourites for relegation, and after finishing in the bottom three for the last two seasons others will also expect scrap.

It needed the Great Escape of 2015 to prevent an immediate return to the second division and Hampshire were even more fortunate last season when, after finishing in the bottom two following defeat at home to Durham in the final game, they were given their controversial reprieve at the cash-strapped north-east county's expense.

But the difference between success and failure in the eight-team first division is a fine line.

Here are five reasons why Hampshire can be serious Championship challengers this season.

MICHAEL CARBERRY'S RECOVERY

The spirit shown by Hampshire's opening batsman is remarkable, even by his standards, and should inspire his teammates this season.

Overcoming the challenges he faced when blood clots were discovered on his lungs in 2010 was impressive enough but to be available for the start of the season eight months after his cancer diagnosis is nothing short of incredible.

That alone should inspire every other member of Hampshire's squad, who must have wondered whether Carberry's career was over when he told them of his cancer diagnosis last July.

Hampshire's players responded to that news by beating Glamorgan, before dedicating one of their few T20 wins last season to their stricken teammate.

Carberry's courage could be the catalyst for rather more.

No matter what he achieves this season, Carberry's recovery has already shown anything is possible. If he can win his battle against cancer, surely Hampshire can win a few more cricket matches.

Carberry's form on the pre-season tour of Barbados (a century and three half-centuries) is anything to go by, he will be a key player once again.

But it is the way he has overcome adversity that could inspire Hampshire's players most. That is harder to quantify than weight of runs. But Hampshire's players will only need to see Carberry alongside them to raise their game when the going gets tough. That alone could turn draws into wins.

A TOP-CLASS SEAM ATTACK

Last season Hampshire finished with the lowest number of bowling points in the first division, but Kyle Abbott, Fidel Edwards and Reece Topley has the potential to be a Championship-winning seam triumvirate.

Perhaps we should not get too excited as we all know what happened when we



The fast-rising Mason Crane could be a key man for Hampshire in the warmer months of the 2017 season.



raved about the prospect of Edwards sharing the new ball with Topley last season (injuries meant they only played three matches between them).

The skiddy pace of Edwards allied with the height and left-arm angle provided by Topley is a match-winning combination.

Now their youth and experience has been supplemented by Abbott, a bowler at the peak of his powers after walking away from his South Africa career at the age of 29.

These are big ifs but if Topley stays fit, if Edwards bowls like he did in 2015 and if Abbott reproduces his 2014 form, Hampshire have a seam attack to die for. It has the potential to be as effective as

any three-pronged attack in the country.

Middlesex trio Toby Roland-Jones (54) Tim Murtagh (43) and Steven Finn (31) took 125 wickets between them for last year's county champions, while Jack Brooks (65) Steve Patterson (45) and Ryan Sidebottom (45) claimed a magnificent 155 as Yorkshire won the 2015 title.

The first division has been reduced to eight teams this season, with 14 games per county instead of 16.

But Abbott, Edwards and Topley are well capable of 100-plus wickets between them. Even if Topley only plays half the games there is plenty of seam back-up in the form of Brad Wheal, Gareth Berg and



Michael Carberry, main picture, has enjoyed a great pre-season. Left - Fidel Edwards is fit again after missing most of last season.

fit-again all-rounders Ryan Stevenson and Chris Wood.

MASON CRANE

If Hampshire are going to challenge for the County Championship anytime soon, their best chance will be before their leg-spin prodigy is an England player.

Crane will be centrally contracted at some point in the next few years. At the rate he is progressing, this may well be the last season Hampshire have him to themselves.

It is no coincidence that Hampshire's highest Championship finishes of recent years have been when they have had a

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

a title challenge

Jimmy Adams, left, Sean Ervine and Lewis McManus at The Ageas Bowl earlier this week.



Rilee Rossouw will add depth to Hampshire's batting.

world-class leg-spinner in their ranks. In 2005 Shane Warne led Hampshire to second place when he was not producing the Ashes performances that inspired Crane to take up leg-spin at the age of eight.

Three years later, Imran Tahir's first season with the county ended in a third-place finish.

If Crane is not yet in that bracket, he is not far off after a winter of wizardry in Australia that culminated in him becoming New South Wales' first overseas player since Imran Khan in 1984/85.

The hype increased with his sensational recent spell of 4-39 for the South against

the North and his four-wicket salvo for the MCC against county champions Middlesex in the UAE earlier this week.

Early-season conditions are likely to ensure he does not play in Hampshire's first few games, which include Middlesex's visit for the opening home game over the Easter weekend.

But to say will be a key player in mid-summer, when conditions will be in his favour, is a huge understatement.

When Crane is bowling alongside the likes of Abbott, Edwards and Topley, Hampshire will have an attack that looks more than capable of bowling counties out twice.

BATTING DEPTH

For many years Hampshire have struggled to post enough first-innings runs to be competitive.

But with George Bailey and Rilee Rossouw added to the top five, selecting the batting line-up is going to have director of cricket Giles White and head coach Craig White reaching for the Ibuprofen at some selection meetings this season. A nice problem to have etc.

A classy left-hander, Rossouw could start the season as one of four southpaws in Hampshire's top six.

He is best known as a white-ball player. But he scored a triple century in the

Super Sport series, South Africa's County Championship equivalent - at the age of 20 and 23! against Australia A in 2014.

Bailey is also best known for his limited-overs achievements but has just had the best first-class season of his career with Tasmania (839 runs at 59.92). His captaincy will also give Hampshire a fresh dimension.

Even without Rossouw and Bailey, Hampshire's batting resources are stronger than they were last season.

With James Vince available after dropping out of the Test squad and Michael Carberry well again, they have two former England batsmen high on motivation.

Sean Ervine produced the best Championship form of his Hampshire career last season, while Liam Dawson is approaching his prime.

Jimmy Adams and Will Smith will provide no shortage of experience when called upon, while England Lion Tom Alsop is one to watch after scoring his maiden first-class century last September.

Hampshire's batting now has such strength in depth that homegrown opener Joe Weatherley has gone on loan to Kent, at his own request.

457 INTERNATIONAL CAPS

First division matches will be played with more intensity than ever this season, now that the County Championship's top flight has been streamlined into an eight-team, 14-match competition.

So it bodes well that so many of the Hampshire team have played the game at the highest level.

Eight of the team likely to play Yorkshire on Friday have played international cricket.

When George Bailey is available, Hampshire will have up to nine players with Tests or one-day international experience.

Carberry (13), Rossouw (51), Vince (17), Ervine (47), Dawson (4), Abbott (60), Edwards (125) and Topley (16) have 333 caps between them in all formats.

When Bailey arrives that total will rise to 457.

On paper, it is probably the best Hampshire squad since the class of 2005 - which included Shane Warne, Kevin Pietersen, Simon Katich, Nic Pothas, John Crawley, Chris Tremlett, Shaun Udal and Ervine - finished as Championship runners-up.

Topley and Rossouw are the only ones of the current crop not to have played Test cricket but, crucially, none of the aforementioned are likely to play any Tests this summer.

Dawson could miss up to five Championship matches because of his limited-overs England commitments, which is likely to include series against Ireland and South Africa in May, the Champions Trophy in June and the ODI series against West Indies at the end of the season.

Vince may yet earn an England recall in the white-ball formats but, at this stage, neither of them is likely to be on Test duty against South Africa and the Windies.

Bailey may well be available for most of the season too. His weather means he will not play in the first three Championship matches but it is doubtful whether he will be called up for the Champions Trophy, having not played in Australia's last two ODI series or their last T20 series.

County ins and outs

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T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - QF. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - QF.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Runners-up. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

Gloucestershire

Ins: Phil Mustard (Durham), Cameron Bancroft, Michael Klinger (white-ball primarily), Tye (T20 Blast)

Outs: Tom Hampton (released), Hamish Marshall (Retired)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 9th (Div 2). 2013 - 6th. 2014 - 7th. 2015 - 6th. 2016 - 6th.

T20 Blast: 2012 - QF. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - QF.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - QF. 2015 - Winners. 2016 - Group stage.

Hampshire

Ins: Asher Hart (Durham) George Bailey (Middlesex), Fraser Hay, Kyle Abbott, Rilee Rossouw.

Outs: Adam Wheater (Essex), Ryan McLaren (Lancashire), James Tomlinson, Andy Carter (both retired), Joe Weatherley (loan to Kent)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 4th (Div 2).



Kyle Abbott

2013 - 4th. 2014 - 1st, 2015 - 7th (Div 1). 2016 - 8th.

T20 Blast: 2012 - Winners. 2013 - SF. 2014 - SF. 2015 - SF. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Winners. 2013 - SF. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - QF. 2016 - Group stage.

Kent

Ins: Will Gidman (Nottinghamshire), Joe Weatherley (loan Kent)

Outs: Hardus Viljoen (Derbyshire), David Griffiths, Sam Weller (both released), Tom Latham (Durham)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 3rd (Div 2). 2013 - 7th. 2014 - 6th. 2015 - 7th. 2016 - 2nd.

T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - QF. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - SF. 2015 - QF. 2016 - QF.

Lancashire

Ins: Junaid Khan (T20 Blast), Ryan McLaren (Hampshire), Brooke Guest, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dane Vilas.

Outs: Neil Wagner (Essex), Nathan Buck (Northamptonshire), Gavin Griffiths (Leicestershire), Luis Reece (Derbyshire), George Edwards (released), Tom Smith (Retired).

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County ins and outs

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Last 5 years
 Championship: 2012 - 8th (Div 1).
 2013 - 1st (Div 2). 2014 - 8th (Div 1).
 2015 - 2nd (Div 2). 2016 - 7th (Div 1).
 T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Runners-up. 2015 - Winners. 2016 - Group stage.
 One-day Cup: 2012 - SF. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Ins: Luke Ronchi (T20 Blast),
 Cameron Delport (white-ball only),
 Gavin Griffiths (Lancashire), Callum Parkinson (Derbyshire), Richard Jones (Warwickshire), Dieter Klein (German passport), Colin Ackermann (SA), James Burke (Surrey loan)
 Outs: Jigar Naik, Ollie Freckingham, Michael Burgess, Atif Sheikh, Rob Taylor, Niall O'Brien (all released)

Last 5 years
 Championship: 2012 - 7th (Div 2).
 2013 - 9th. 2014 - 9th. 2015 - 9th. 2016 - 7th.
 T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.
 One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.



George Bailey

MIDDLESEX

Ins: Brendon McCullum (NatWest T20 Blast), Adam Voges
 Outs: Andrew Balbirnie (released), Cameron Steel (Durham), George Bailey (Hampshire), Max Holden (loan Northants)
 Last 5 years
 Championship: 2012 - 3rd (Div 1). 2013 - 5th. 2014 - 7th. 2015 - 2nd. 2016 - 1st
 T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - QF.
 One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Ins: Nathan Buck (Lancashire), Seekkuge Prasanna (NatWest T20 Blast), Max Holden (loan Middlesex)
 Outs: Olly Stone (Warwickshire), Monty Panesar (released)
 Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 8th (Div 2). 2013 - 2nd. 2014 - 9th (Div 1). 2015 - 5th (Div 2). 2016 - 5th.
 T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Winners. 2014 - QF. 2015 - Runners-up. 2016 - Winners.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - QF.

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PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

Hants squad is

By Simon Walter



HAMPSHIRE have one of their strongest squads for many years as they prepare for their third season back in the Specsavers County Championship's first division.

After the Great Escape of 2015 and last season's reprieve, following Durham's relegation, Hampshire now have a squad capable of challenging at the other end of the table.

It has been augmented by the signing three internationals, who will be available for most of the season, in the form of Kyle Abbott, new Championship captain George Bailey and Rilee Rossouw.

The return to full health of Michael Carberry along with the rehabilitation of Fidel Edwards and Reece Topley, coupled with Mason Crane's rapid progress, has also raised expectations considerably ahead of the new season.

This is Hampshire's new-look squad, the first 11 being a possible team for the opening Specsavers County Championship match against Yorkshire at Headingley next Friday.

JIMMY ADAMS

A modern day Mr Hampshire, who should start the season as Michael Carberry's opening partner.

But the long-serving left-hander will be well aware of the need to improve on a record of one century in Hampshire's two seasons back in division one. He reached fifty eight times in the County Championship last season, without converting into three figures. With competition for places fiercer than ever at The Ageas Bowl, that has to change if he is to be a regular.

MICHAEL CARBERRY

The former England batsman's recovery from cancer is already turning out to be one of the sports stories of the year. If he maintains his pre-season form, it will be like the signing of a new player for director of cricket Giles White.

Carberry made 58 and 68 against Nottinghamshire and Northants in Barbados, as well as a 41-ball 78 in a T20 thrashing of Durham MCCU.

Then he scored 107 in an inter-squad friendly at The Ageas Bowl earlier this week. Was also striking the ball well against Sussex on Thursday, before he was out for 15.

Ominously for Hampshire's first division rivals, Liam Daw-



James Vince faces the cameras at Hampshire's press day at The Ageas Bowl this week.

son said: "Carbs is in the form of his life, he's back to his old, attacking self."

"It's great to see him back on the pitch. The way he's batting is unbelievable, he's striking the ball exceptionally well."

"You couldn't bowl to him the other day."

RILEE ROSSOUW

Could prove to be one of the signings of the season, given his track record with South Africa. His biggest challenge will

be adapting to unfamiliar conditions, especially in early-season.

He had never even been to England before, never mind played here, before his arrival last month. But his performance in the 50-over win against Sussex bodes well. The 27 year-old made 79 before he was run out on his Hampshire 'debut' at Hove, where he also took a spectacular, one-handed slip catch.

With a first-class average of 44.32, he has a proven track record in the longer form of the

game. His 1,239 one-day international runs at 38, not to mention his impressive recent form at the Pakistan Super League, also makes him one to watch in the white-ball competitions.

JAMES VINCE

Will be determined to score the runs needed for a Test recall after the disappointment of last summer.

Won't have the Hampshire captaincy to distract him for most of the season, with George Bailey

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

looking strong

Reece Topley, below, takes a selfie while waiting for the official team group photo to be taken. Right - Kyle Abbott covers up on a grey afternoon.



taking the reins in the County Championship when he arrives next month.

Will continue to lead Hampshire in the Royal London One-Day Cup and the NatWest T20 Blast. The strengthening of Hampshire's top order should help Vince to flourish in the Championship. If he can begin as he did last year - with a century against Yorkshire at Headingley - so much the better.

SEAN ERVINE

Last year's beneficiary has been in fine form in pre-season, the highlight of which was his unbeaten century against Northamptonshire in Barbados. The veteran left-hander will be determined to carry on from where he left off last season, when he scored three centuries in five innings during the run-in to finish with 1,000-plus first-class runs for the first time. He missed the first four matches of last season to injury so do not bet against him surpassing his 2016 aggregate of

1,050, which he made at an average of 61.76.

LIAM DAWSON

Gives Hampshire terrific balance with his all-round skills in all formats and is full of confidence after his winter with England, even if he was carrying the drinks more than he would have liked.

Made an unbeaten 66 on his Test debut against India in Chennai in December before taking a respectable 2-129 from 43 overs, albeit in

an innings defeat.

That made him an international in all three formats and he made his second T20 international appearance, also against India, a month later. An outstanding white-ball player, he does not expect another Test call-up any time soon, but will be on limited-overs duty for England this summer, which includes the Champions Trophy in June.

LEWIS MCMANUS

Preparing to start his first full season as Hampshire's first-choice wicketkeeper after making the position his own midway through last season.

He has less competition for his place this year, his usurping of Adam Wheater having hastened the Essex man's return to Chelmsford.

Crucially, he has also shown he is capable of scoring big runs, having scored an unbeaten 132 against Surrey in the Championship, his maiden first-class century, last July.

GARETH BERG

This time last year, Hampshire's 2015 Players' Player of the Year was already the first injury casualty of the season. The former Middlesex all-rounder underwent knee surgery after he was crocked during the annual pre-season tour to Barbados. The good news is that there were no casualties in the Caribbean this year and Berg is expected to be available to be available as the fourth seamer against Yorkshire at Headingley on Friday.

KYLE ABBOTT

If he can replicate his 2014 form for Hampshire, the county should be in the top half of the first division at the very least. Since he was last with Hampshire, Abbott has played 26 of his 28 one-day internationals as well as nine of his 11 Tests. Having sacrificed his international career to move to The Ageas Bowl, only the odd T20 deal is likely to keep the 29-year-old away from the Ageas Bowl over the next four years. He took 36 Championship wickets at 20.33 apiece as Hampshire won promotion three years ago. If he can reproduce that sort of form - or that which saw him take 27 Test wickets at 25 apiece since his last Hampshire spell - the county should have a very good season.

REECE TOPLEY

His second season with Hampshire cannot go any worse than the first, given that he suffered a broken hand while batting on the first day of his first-class debut.

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County ins and outs

from facing page

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Ins: Ish Sodhi (T20 Blast), James Pattinson (end of June), Dan Christian (T20 Blast)

Outs: Sam Wood (released), Will Gidman (Kent), Imran Tahir (Derbyshire)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 5th (Div 1). 2013 - 7th. 2014 - 4th. 2015 - 3rd. 2016 - 9th.

T20 Blast: 2012 - QF. 2013 - QF. 2014 - QF. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - SF. One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Winners. 2014 - SF. 2015 - SF. 2016 - Group stage.

SOMERSET

Ins: Steven Davies (Surrey), Dean Elgar

Outs: Chris Rogers (retired), Alex Barrow (released)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 2nd (Div 1). 2013 - 6th. 2014 - 6th. 2015 - 6th. 2016 - 2nd.

T20 Blast: 2012 - SF. 2013 - QF. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - SF.

SURREY



Kevin Pietersen

Ins: Scott Borthwick, Mark Stoneman (both Durham), Kevin Pietersen (NatWest T20 Blast), Kumar Sangakkara, Aaron Finch (T20 Blast & Champ cover for Sangakkara)

Outs: Steven Davies (Somerset), Gary Wilson (Derbyshire), James Burke (Leicestershire), Azhar Mahmood (retired)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 7th (Div 1). 2013 - 9th. 2014 - 5th (Div 2). 2015 - 1st. 2016 - 5th (Div 1).

T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Runners-up. 2014 - SF. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Runners-up. 2016 - Runners-up.

SUSSEX

Ins: Stiaan van Zyl, Laurie Evans (Warwickshire), Ross Taylor (T20 Blast), Vernon Philander (mid-June), David Wiese (Kolpak). **Outs:** Craig Cachopa, Fynn Hudson-Prentice (both released), Lewis Hatchett (retired)

Last 5 years
Championship: 2012 - 4th (Div 1). 2013 - 3rd. 2014 - 3rd. 2015 - 8th (Div 1). 2016 - 4th (Div 2).

T20 Blast: 2012 - SF. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - QF. 2016 - Group stage.

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County ins and outs

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One-day Cup: 2012 - QF. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

WARWICKSHIRE

Ins: Olly Stone (Northamptonshire), Colin de Grandhomme (NatWest T20 Blast), Jeetan Patel

Outs: Varun Chopra (Essex), Richard Jones (Leicestershire), Recordo Gordon, Jonathan Webb, Freddie Coleman (all released)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 1st (Div 1). 2013 - 4th. 2014 - 2nd. 2015 - 5th. 2016 - 6th.

T20 Blast: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Winners. 2015 - SF. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Runners-up. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Runners-up. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Winners.

WORCESTERSHIRE

Ins: Mitchell Santner (T20 Blast), John Hastings

Outs: Chris Russell (released), Matt Henry (Derbyshire)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 9th (Div 1). 2013 - 5th (Div 2). 2014 - 2nd. 2015 - 9th (Div 1). 2016 - 3rd (Div 2).

T20 Blast: 2012 - QF. 2013 - Group



Travis Head

stage. 2014 - QF. 2015 - QF. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - QF.

YORKSHIRE

Ins: Peter Handscomb, Travis Head (T20 Blast)

Outs: Andrew Gale (retired)

Last 5 years

Championship: 2012 - 2nd (Div 2). 2013 - 2nd (Div 1). 2014 - 1st. 2015 - 1st. 2016 - 3rd.

T20 Blast: 2012 - Runners-up. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - Group stage. 2015 - Group stage. 2016 - Group stage.

One-day Cup: 2012 - Group stage. 2013 - Group stage. 2014 - QF. 2015 - SF. 2016 - SF.

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

Introducing the

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The 23 year-old will be looking forward to bowling his first ball for the county against Yorkshire at Headingley.

He also had a stress fracture of the back and an issue with his left shoulder that required surgery. But he started bowling again in Barbados last month and should be back to full fitness in time for the opening match.

Signed a one-year contract extension last month, which keeps him at The Ageas Bowl until 2018.

FIDEL EDWARDS

The former West Indies star flew in from Barbados this week and will be fully fit for the opening game at Headingley - the scene of the fast bowler's injury last year.

Edwards missed the rest of the season after suffering a serious ankle injury on the outfield in Leeds, during a game of football before the final day's play against the county champions.

Edwards' raw pace and experience is a rare combination. But at the age of 35, and after such a serious injury, the question is will he be the same bowler that took 46 wickets to inspire Hampshire's Great Escape in 2015. If he is and can stay fit, Hampshire will be formidable opposition.

GEORGE BAILEY

Will captain Hampshire in the Specsavers County Championship when he arrives next month. The Australian will bring considerable experience to the role, having captained Tasmania and Australia's one-day international and T20 sides many times.

But he is missing the first three Championship matches because of his forthcoming wedding, as well as the Royal London One-Day Cup opener.

And if he is included in Australia's Champions Trophy squad, he will also be unavailable for the first half of June.

But he is in the form of his life after his best-ever season for Tasmania. The 34 year-old scored 839 runs at 59.92, which earned him a place in Cricket Australia's Sheffield Shield team of the season for the second year running.

MASON CRANE

Hampshire's leg-spin sensation is unlikely to play in the first game at Headingley, with Liam Dawson's slow left-armers likely to be sufficient in early-season conditions, especially at a ground that has traditionally favoured the seamers. But when he does play it should send a few more cricket lovers through the turnstiles. Crane has had an exceptional and history-making winter,



Liam Dawson casts a glance at new signing Rilee Rossouw during Hampshire's press call this week.



Director of cricket Giles White, below, poses for a picture under grey skies at The Ageas Bowl.



Kyle Abbott (left) blows into his hands between team group shots during the media day at the Ageas Bowl.

following his call-up and impressive debut for New South Wales after an outstanding winter at first grade level for Gordon CC.

Still only 20, he reached 50 first-class wickets at a younger age than Shane Warne when he took five wickets against South Australia.

His performance for the South against the North, when he took

four wickets in 12 balls, has whetted the appetite further.

TOM ALSOP

Has played 11 games for the England Lions since December, the highlight being a knock of 96 against Sri Lanka A in Colombo a few weeks ago.

The left-hander was frustrated

at not capitalising on some good starts for the Lions. He also played in the recent North-South series but was dismissed for a pair when he played for the MCC in the season's traditional curtain-raiser, against county champions Middlesex in the UAE last week.

BRAD WHEAL

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

class of 2017 ...

Simon Walter profiles the men aiming to bring success back to The Ageas Bowl



Reece Topley brushes the back of Michael Carberry's head during the media day at the Ageas Bowl.



Is sure to benefit from the arrival of fellow South African bowler Kyle Abbott as he tries to build on an encouraging second season at The Ageas Bowl. His 20 Championship wickets last year including 6-51 against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge and 4-39 in the final game against Durham, when Hampshire needed him most.

A great legacy left by Dale

Benkenstein, who left his role as Hampshire coach last July, having spotted Wheal playing for National Under 19s in December 2014.

ASHER HART

Highly-rated 20 year-old all-rounder from the Durham academy. Played several games for the north-east county's 2nd XI with-

out breaking into the first team at the Riverside. But his move to Hampshire at the end of last season was another frustration for fans of cash-strapped Durham, whose controversial relegation last year resulted in Hampshire's reprieve.

It is a big move for Hart in every sense, given that he is from Carlisle. He has no shortage of

competition but took two wickets against Sussex in Thursday's 50-over win at Hove.

BRAD TAYLOR

His season cannot go any worse than last year, when a freak injury - ankle ligament damage sustained after his studs caught in the sponsors' signage on the Ageas Bowl steps - limited him to a couple of T20 appearances. An outstanding off-spinner, he became Hampshire's youngest player since 1867 when he made his first-class debut as a 16 year-old against Lancashire at Southport in 2013.

But he has only played one Championship match since then and none at all in the first division.

Has developed into a genuine all-rounder but as long as Liam Dawson and Mason Crane are around it is going to be hard to force his way in.

WILL SMITH

Hampshire have much more batting depth than in the former Durban captain's first three seasons at The Ageas Bowl, which may well limit his opportunities this season.

The development of Tom Allop, the signing of Rilee Rossouw and Michael Carberry's return to health and full fitness will make for a very difficult selection decision for the opening game at Headingly.

But Smith is also a very useful option with bat and ball in the limited-overs competitions, as well as being an outstanding fielder.

RYAN STEVENSON

Struggled with a back injury for most of last season, which was sustained during his first experience of first-class competition during the Great Escape of September 2015. But he is now bowling again and took two wickets in Hampshire's one-wicket win against Sussex at Hove this week.

Assuming he stays fit, he will be a very useful back-up to what is one of the first division's strongest seam attacks.

CHRIS WOOD

After missing most of last season with another knee injury, the all-rounder is close to returning to full fitness.

Even when he is fully fit, there will not be many opportunities to add to the three Championship matches he has made since the promotion-winning season of 2014. But his white-ball skills should provide more scope for first-team appearances in the limited-overs competitions.

T20 must be free-to-air

Eoin Morgan insists English cricket's answer to the Indian Premier League can restore the 2005 Ashes feel-good factor - but only if screened on free-to-air television.

England's one-day captain gave his impassioned backing to plans for a new eight-team city-based tournament to county chiefs this week.

Morgan believes England are overdue for their own high-profile T20 contest, admitting players could in time command the kind of seven-figure salaries that dominate the Indian tournament.

The 30-year-old Middlesex star remains adamant a showpiece T20 event can restore the kind of soaring public interest that followed England's much-cherished Ashes win from 12 years ago.

"I've played six years of the IPL and three years of the Big Bash," said Morgan.

"The impact Australia's Big Bash has had on the public, growing the game, it's been phenomenal.

"The age groups and young families the Big Bash engages with are through the roof, it's something like a 70 per cent increase in participation from families and young kids since two years ago. It's ridiculous numbers.

"This probably should have happened here a while ago. We're always going to have the same cricket fans unless we do something differently.



Eoin Morgan.

"People are falling out of love with the game, because we're not engaging enough with the public.

"The intention is to have quite a lot of the games on free-to-air, which is a huge part of it.

"One of the biggest turning points in my generation has been the 2005 Ashes.

"The amount of people in and around London specifically, who aren't necessarily involved in cricket, talking about cricket, that was awesome.

"To get that back it's going to have to be as big a change as taking cricket free-to-air."

England pace man Tymal Mills commanded £1.4m in this year's IPL auction, with Morgan claiming cricket's top stars fully merit such salaries.

Morgan said: "The price tags are there for a reason, it's your market value at the moment. Guys are paid a lot of money because they are worth it.

"You're paid a lot of money because you are that good, and you're capable of dealing with things other people aren't, so I don't see money changing any individuals a great deal.

"I'm sure in 10 years' time you'll get guys going for five million, probably in the IPL to start. It's not impossible that a million could happen here. It has the potential to be that big.

"Down the road it will be huge. It will take time, like the Big Bash, but the plans are really exciting."

HAMPSHIRE CR



Hampshire 2017. Back (left to right): Lewis McManus, Brad Wheal, Asher Hart, Brad Taylor, Will Smith, Nick Karamouzis (head of strength and conditioning), Ryan Stevenson, Reece Topley, Chris Wood, Gareth Berg, Liam Dawson, Joe Maiden (performance analyst), Jamie Cook (strength and conditioning), Jimmy Adams, Sean Ervine.



and conditioning). Middle: Dan Young (physiotherapist), James Clegg (lead physiotherapist), Rilee Rossouw, conditioning coach). Front: Kyle Abbott, Michael Carberry, Craig White (head coach), James Vince, Giles White

Hampshire fixtures 2017

APRIL

- 2-4 Cardiff MCCU (h) FR
- 7-10 Yorkshire (a) CC1
- 14-17 Middlesex (h) CC1
- 21-24 Yorkshire (h) CC1
- 27 Kent (a) 50L
- 30 Essex (a) 50L

MAY

- 3 Middlesex (h) 50L
- 7 Gloucestershire (h) 50L
- 10 Somerset (a) 50L
- 12 Glamorgan (h) 50L
- 14 Surrey (a) 50L
- 17 Sussex (h) 50L
- 19-22 Essex (a) CC1
- 26-29 Somerset (a) CC1
- 27 England v South Africa, ODI, Ageas Bowl.

JUNE

- 2-5 Warwickshire (h) CC1
- 8-11 South Africa A (h) Fr
- 13 50L QF
- 16-17 50L SF
- 21 England v South Africa T20, Ageas Bowl
- 19-22 Lancashire (a, tbc) CC1
- 26-29 Somerset (h) CC1

JULY

- 3-6 Surrey (a) CC1
- 7 Glamorgan (a) T20
- 12 Sussex (a) T20
- 14 Middlesex (h) T20
- 20 Sussex (h) T20
- 21 Essex (a) T20
- 23 Surrey (h) T20
- 26 Somerset (a) T20
- 28 Gloucestershire (a) T20

AUGUST

- 1 Kent (h) T20
- 3 Middlesex (Lord's) T20
- 4 Essex (h) T20
- 6-9 Lancashire (h) CC1
- 10 Glamorgan (h) T20
- 11 Kent (a) T20
- 18 Somerset (h) T20
- 22-25 T20 QF

SEPTEMBER

- 2 T20 Finals Day
- 5-8 Surrey (h) CC1
- 12-15 Middlesex (a, tbc) CC1
- 19-22 Essex (h) CC1
- 25-28 Warwickshire (a) CC1
- 29 England v West Indies, Ageas Bowl

Key

- CC1 - Specsavers County Championship division one
- 50L - Royal London One-Day Cup
- T20 - Natwest T20 Blast

PINK

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

Five names to watch ...

The new Specsavers County Championship season begins on April 7.

Here, the Sports Pink identifies five players to watch during the 2017 campaign.

MOHAMMAD AMIR

This is a name to conjure with in Chelmsford. Essex supporters will have to wait until the second half of the summer, following the Champions Trophy, to get a glimpse of one of cricket's most mercurial talents. After his much-chronicled first tour of England ended in shame and then jail thanks to the 2010 Lord's spot-fixing saga, the rehabilitated left-arm seamer's redemptive second trip was curiously uneventful last summer. Part Three of Amir in England will nonetheless



Mohammad Amir

be much-anticipated, and among other narratives it will be interesting to see how Alastair Cook reacts - having been notably equivocal to sharing a Test match field in opposition - if the pair end up playing alongside one another at any point.

LIAM LIVINGSTONE

It is less than two years since Livingstone first hit the national headlines with a remarkable innings of 350 in a Cheshire club match as Nantwich beat Caldy by a staggering 500 runs. Still only 23, the big-hitting all-rounder from Cumbria has done plenty since then to ensure he will not be restricted to one fleeting moment of fame. His outstanding winter for England Lions recalls the impact made by Kevin Pietersen in the winter before England's historic 2005 Ashes win.

Continued on facing page

Bell targeting his own piece of Ashes history

Ian Bell admits he is eyeing an England return and has targeted making Ashes history.

The Warwickshire captain is preparing for the start of the Championship season with one eye on an international comeback.

Bell, who has 118 Test caps, has not played for his country since failing to score in the second Test against Pakistan in November 2015, just a few months after winning his fifth

Ashes series.

England face Australia in Brisbane in November in the first Test of the 2017-18 tour.

Sir Ian Botham and Wilfred Rhodes are the only other Englishmen to have played in five Ashes-winning series and Bell wants to top them if he can earn a recall.

"I've been lucky enough to win five Ashes, no one has ever won six so there's always a

carrot for me if I was lucky enough to get into that squad," he said.

"There's no doubt, on an individual level, to be part of a squad which wins six would be something pretty special. You always think about it. I still have ambitions to play for England. I enjoyed playing in the Big Bash which was as close to playing international cricket without playing for England."

Antidote to far-reaching change?

By David Clough

The start of the 2017 county championship season next week will bring welcome comfort and reassurance alongside the perennial excitement that arrives with every new campaign.

As the England and Wales Cricket Board presses on with plans to reorder the summer again - and more radically than ever - from 2020, events around the country on April 7 will bear a familiarity which extends long beyond living memory.

The business will get very serious plenty soon enough - not least, for example, if Alastair Cook ends up facing his first ball in first-class cricket since his resignation as Test captain against his fellow England great James Anderson when Essex take on Lancashire on their return to Specsavers Division One.

But aside from the eye-catching opening exchanges, the games within games, at Chelmsford and six other venues at 11am next Friday there will be an air of slow-burn, manageable expectation which may just prove the antidote many need to the far-reaching changes afoot.

That is not to say all will be as it always has been, of course.

The championship has undergone more than its share of transformations already, especially in modern times, since its official inception in 1890.

By the time a new franchise Twenty20 tournament inevitably redraws the landscape yet again, the four-day competition will be marking 20 years of its own two-division format.

Before then, though, this year sees a reduction from 16 to 14 rounds of matches and an asymmetric Division Two structure in which 10 teams will no longer be able to play each other twice.



Alastair Cook could be facing James Anderson next week.

Taking part will be clubs with points to prove, perceived wrongs to right perhaps and - in the case of current champions Middlesex - a benchmark to repeat.

Last September, it had been 23 years between the Londoners' eighth and ninth outright title wins.

James Franklin's team sealed the deal in the most thrilling fashion, Toby Roland-Jones finishing with a hat-trick as Mid-

dlesex bowled Yorkshire out for 178 in 35.2 overs in the last session of the season to stay above their back-to-back championship-winning opponents and also deprive Somerset of a still elusive first title in their history.

That Lord's culmination of a protracted three-way tussle is no dramatic outlier in the battle for silverware over recent years, in which several championship pennants have been narrowly won.

What of the 2017 contenders then?

Middlesex should be top of plenty of lists, on a trends basis alone.

Yorkshire's wins in 2014 and 2015 provided the fourth instance in the previous 16 years of champions following up the next season, and the squad assembled by Angus Fraser et al looks capable of doing the same.

They had only half an hour and four points to spare eight months ago - but with a settled and powerful line-up which has no obvious weakness and a clutch of players still improving to complement others' experience, many boxes are ticked.

Yorkshire will do well to kick-start a resurgence, while for runners-up Somerset getting over the line has proved a major headache not just in first-class cricket but the shorter formats too.

Of the other likely contenders, Surrey are a coming force again - having re-established themselves in the top flight and subsequently acquired Durham wantaways Scott Borthwick and Mark Stoneman.

Those two top-order batsmen doubtless moved south with mixed feelings, since when the true plight of their native north east club has become painfully apparent.

Durham's financial difficulties are well documented - and although they have recruited wisely in the shape of overseas signings Stephen Cook and Tom Latham, the 48-point deduction with which they must start the new season following their enforced relegation will surely leave them with an impossible task to push for a return.

Instead, Kent - still irked that as last year's Division Two runners-up they must stay put rather than top-flight strugglers Hampshire move down - and Nottinghamshire, after the shock of relegation, may be in the promotion running.

In the two white-ball competitions, all teams have every right

PINK

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

How Saints legend is helping Lewis

By Paul
McNamara

THE start of the cricket season and dank, miserable weather are familiar bedfellows.

Under cold, slate grey skies at Hampshire's Ageas Bowl home, though, Lewis McManus is a ray of light, the personification of brighter days ahead.

At 22 years old, Poole-born McManus – a former football teammate of Cherries player Harry Cornick – already has some pretty decent ones behind him.

The wicket-keeper batsman struck his maiden first-class hundred last year and averaged nearly 40 with the blade in what was the very definition of a breakthrough campaign.

What's more, the former England under-19 player's consistent excellence behind the stumps impressed his county enough for them to reward him with a fresh three-year contract.

McManus, though, views his progress thus far as merely a foot in the door. He has seen Hampshire colleagues off representing their country this winter and he wants a piece of that himself.

It helps that, in his drive for success on the county and international stage, he can turn to a former Premier League football star for counsel.

McManus said: "I was delighted with how last year went. But I have to kick on and be more consistent."

"I want to make myself one of the top wicket-keeper batsmen on the county scene and receiving international recognition is a genuine goal for me."

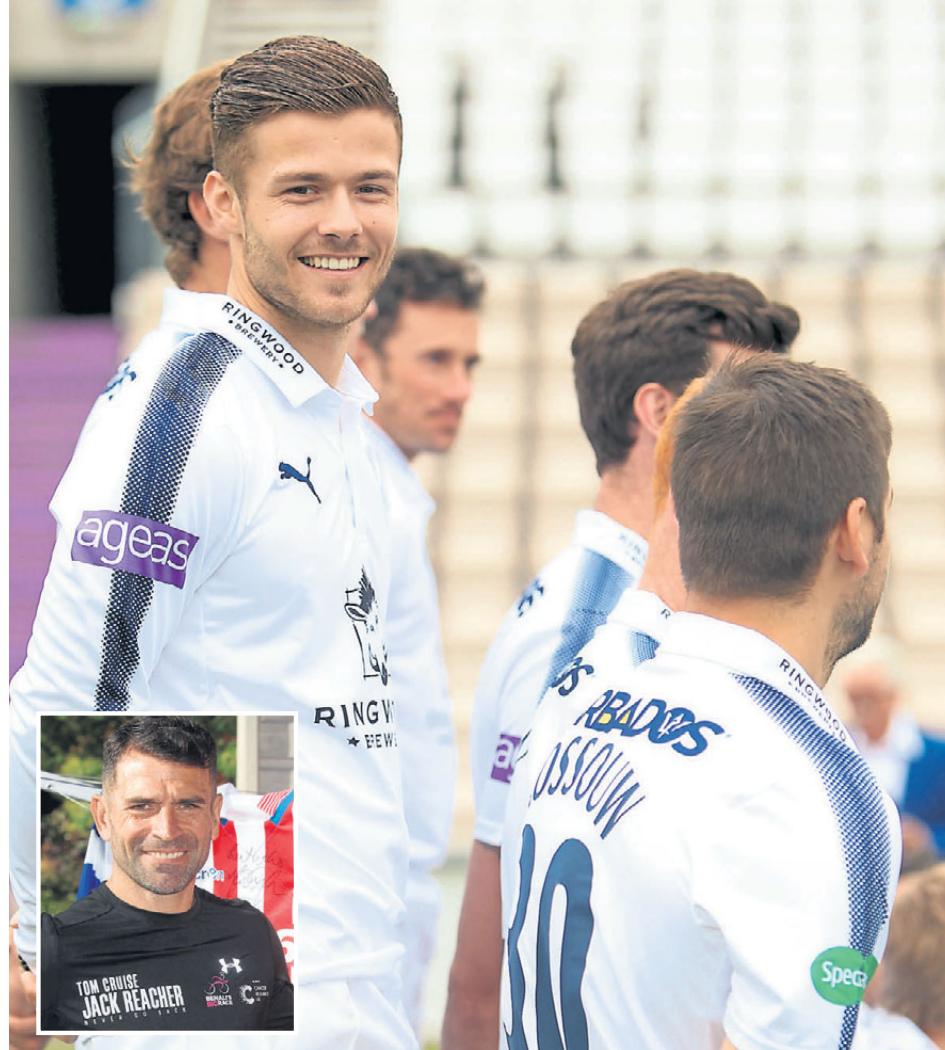
"But first and foremost I need to control what I can, to score runs and take catches – and, hopefully, the international stuff will look after itself at the end of the summer."

"To get into the first team here as a wicket-keeper, with only one position up for grabs, I have had to get my head down and work so hard. That is what I will keep doing."

McManus remains in touch with Cornick. Indeed, their Poole Borough under-13s football team boasted some impressive stock.

He takes up the story: "Those were good days. I still speak to Harry and it is great to see his career going so well."

"There were a lot of decent footballers in that team, we had (for



Lewis McManus, above, at Hampshire's press day this week. Inset: Franny Benali.

mer Cherries youngsters) Josh Carmichael and Brandon Goodship as well.

"I wish I still played. We play in the warm-ups here, which is always fun and I miss it quite a lot."

Back to the cricket. Hampshire avoided relegation to Division Two of the County Championship last season only due to Durham's demotion from the top-flight owing to financial issues.

The county have their sights on contesting matters at the other end of the division this year, aided by high-profile foreign recruits Kyle Abbott, George Bailey and Rilee Rossouw.

McManus is planning to tap into the overseas trio's wisdom in

his pursuit of continual improvement.

"Having those guys in the squad is like gold dust," he says. "Us young lads really look up to all the senior players and, in terms of helping us quicken our development, having them here is a massive boost."

"We have a great balance now of international players and youngsters, who have proved they can flourish at this level."

"With the squad we have, we are very confident we can beat anybody in Division One."

McManus's partner is Kenzie Benali, whose dad Franny played 373 matches for Southampton before his retirement in 2003.

"Franny is so down to earth and easy to chat to," says McManus.

"His advice in terms of the mental side of sport is so valuable. And with all he has achieved, he is a brilliant role model for any sportsperson."

"I try to chat to him as much as I can about his experiences and his career."

Hampshire launch their campaign at Yorkshire next week, the county against whom it all started for McManus in first-class cricket two years ago.

He has come a long way since then.

But you suspect Lewis McManus has even further to go.

from facing page

Assignments of that magnitude are not yet on Livingstone's radar, but it will take only a little early consolidation for Lancashire at the start of the new season to put him in the frame at least for a possible call-up for the May one-day internationals against Ireland.

STEPHEN COOK

It took the son of former Hampshire coach Jimmy a little longer than his English namesake Alastair to reach the international ranks. But when he did, at the age of 33, this Cook made no mistake with a century on his Test debut against England at Centurion last year. He will be warming up for this summer's rematch by partnering England's new South Africa-born opener Keaton Jennings for Durham in the first half of their campaign in Division Two. It will be no easy task, especially if the northern weather makes for tough batting conditions. But Cook is clearly a skilled and adaptable opener.

JAMES PATTINSON

Pattinson will be hoping for a more encouraging opening gambit on his return to Trent Bridge than on his first visit, when he began the 2013 Ashes with an alarming wide veering



Scott Borthwick

almost into the hands of the slip fielders. It was not quite the portent that Steve Harmison served up in Brisbane as preface to England's 2006/7 whitewash defeat Down Under, but Australia did go on to lose a titanic match and the series. Pattinson gets a chance to impress thanks to the injury which befall the county's first-choice Australian Peter Siddle. His early-season new-ball partnership with Stuart Broad could well give Notts a leg-up as they aim for promotion back into the top flight.

SCOTT BORTHWICK

Durham's loss is very much Surrey's gain, not just in the shape of Borthwick but also his fellow left-hander Mark Stoneman. After the former's 1,060 championship runs in Division One last summer continued his reinvention from promising leg-spinner to top-order batsman, it will be fascinating to see how he fares down south. It was in his previous guise that Borthwick won his solitary Test cap, in Sydney at the end of England's hapless 2013/14 Ashes whitewash defeat. It may be pushing it to suggest he will reprise his international career with bat rather than ball, but there is a reassuring solidity these days to what has become his first-string

Specsavers talking points ...

The new Specsavers County Championship season begins next Friday.

Here, the Sports Pink considers talking points for the 2017 campaign:

ALL CHANGE, FOR HOW LONG?

County cricketers could be forgiven for needing an April re-brief on the structure of their competitions. Key points in the refresher course start with a reduction from 16 to 14 championship rounds.

The late-season final of the Royal London Cup is no more - the 50-over champions will be crowned on the first day of July.

Another note to this season's hopefuls - given the revolution we must expect as the England and Wales Cricket Board presses ahead with the new, all-singing/dancing Twenty20 for 2020 - don't get too comfortable with the 'new' format ... we are in a state of flux.

NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

Middlesex provided an antidote to Yorkshire's championship dominance



James Vince.

last summer. Since then, the South (captained by Hampshire's James Vince and also featuring Liam Dawson, Mason Crane and Tom Alsop - has dominated the North with a 3-0 desert whitewash in the inaugural staging of Andrew Strauss' new bi-lateral pre-season series.

The Londoners' 2016 title was a first to go Lord's in 23 years, since well back in the last millennium. No one can fluke the championship, though, and history proves back-to-back wins are on the cards once a team gels.

Middlesex have a settled batting line-up, highly dependable attack - and crucially, minimal disruption likely at this stage from international calls.

The fiercest challenge may come from just south of the river, with Surrey potentially resurgent - while with two promotion places available again in Division Two, Kent and Nottinghamshire will have significant motivation and favourable prospects. Whoever prevails, if the championship serves up anything like last year's three-way thriller, maybe someone will spot that it can perhaps do without much more tinkering.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Yorkshire chairman Steve Denison recently described the prize money on offer in domestic cricket as a "joke".

Continued on facing page

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

City-based T20

By Simon Carter



English cricket's new city-based Twenty20 tournament moved a giant stride closer this week.

The 41 representatives of first-class counties, MCC and recreational boards will now vote on whether the competition is brought in.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at the important questions about the new tournament.

Done deal? Is the ECB's new tournament now inevitable?

Almost certainly. ECB chief executive Tom Harrison insists there are no longer any significant doubts harboured by the counties. It is a moot point whether the £1.3million-a-year 'pay-off' share of projected tournament revenue has played a major role in changing minds, but this week's confirmation that all 18 clubs have signed "media rights deeds" to allow the governing body to include the new Twenty20 in its upcoming broadcast portfolio appears to have kickstarted a chain of events which can only conclude with a rubber-stamping of plans by this mid-summer at the latest.

Why is it needed?

Harrison speaks of "creating something dramatically different... to attract a thriving new audience". The Indian Premier League and Australia's Big Bash have demonstrated the template of what could be possible - albeit in a vastly different landscape, hemisphere or at least continent.

English cricket 'invented' Twenty20 cricket - the first games took place back in 2003 - but the consensus is that it has yet to cash in properly on the product which has exported so well elsewhere.

Compelling statistics include revelations cited by the ECB that only two per cent of children nominate cricket in its current form as their favourite sport. Additionally, 75 per cent of children spend less than an hour outside every day - less than United Nations guidelines for prison inmates. ECB is hoping to attract a new 'non-captive' audience.

What can we expect in 2020 then?

An eight-team structure taking in 36 matches over 38 days in July and August, concurrent with the domestic 50-over competition and Test series. Plans are fluid to an extent. But at present, it is envis-



aged squads of 15 players will include three each from overseas. There will be a draft of 13 players per team, in salary bands, with the remaining two places filled by those who excel in the NatWest Blast - which will precede the new tournament each summer. Each team will have four home matches, leading to an IPL-style play-off system, and it is hoped up to eight

fixtures will be broadcast free-to-air.

How many star names will be involved?

You would hope lots, but don't get your hopes up.

India's players, for example, do not participate in any of the other T20 leagues in the world apart

Hampshire's Michael Carberry, far left of main picture, and his Perth Scorchers colleagues celebrate winning the Big Bash in 2015. Left - top English stars like Ben Stokes could miss a city-based T20 league in England because of Test commitments.

from the IPL, as the BCCI does not provide them with No Objection Certificates.

If they continue to adopt that attitude - and they probably will - that will rule out the likes of Virat Kohli (top runscorer in the IPL in 2016), Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma and Gautam Gambhir.

In addition, England's Test players will probably not be involved

PINK HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

is on its way ...



as the tournament would be ongoing at the same time as a summer series. They will be assigned to appropriate teams for marketing purposes, but the likes of Ben Stokes, Joe Root and Jos Buttler - crowd pullers one and all - might not play a single game in the new T20 tournament. That seems a shame if the ECB want to try and attract a new audience.

England's T20 Blast tournament has also struggled to attract the leading Australian players for any length of time. David Warner, Shane Watson, Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell are all big names and would help put bums on seats. But Watson has not played for an English county since a second stint with Hampshire in 2005 and Warner not since a brief spell

with Middlesex in 2010 - well before he became a global T20 star.

The same can be said of the leading South Africans. AB De Villiers - one of the biggest names in world cricket and the third top runscorer in the 2016 IPL - has never played for an English county.

Unless the new city team tournament is offering big money, the

Bailout

from facing page

Yorkshire's reward for winning their last title, two years ago, was just over £158,000 - while in 2016 they scooped a combined £36,634 for finishing third in the first-class competition and reaching the semi-finals of both white-ball campaigns. But with the bulk of funding secured instead from a share of the ECB's international revenue, Yorkshire and their rivals know the score - they are playing principally for pride and historic silverware.

ONLY WAY IS UP?

It is perhaps little wonder that Yorkshire have accrued a £20million-plus debt and are currently grappling with how much more to mortgage in order to stay in the running to host international fixtures from 2019. Durham have already trodden that path, of course - and find themselves not only off the Test match list but rock bottom of Division Two with a 48-point penalty.



Sir Ian Botham

likes of Warner and De Villiers may remain conspicuous by their absence.

Where does this leave the current Twenty20 tournament?

Second division at best, possibly oblivion down the line. The existing competition - which has fared well in terms of crowds, broadcast audience and reputation of late - is obviously vulnerable to the ECB's new 'box office' product.

Some counties too must trust and hope they are not about to vote for their own eventual extinction - although they can probably be rightly encouraged by the compromise guarantee that the constitutional change, to allow an eight-team tournament where previously all competitions had to include all first-class clubs, will be a one-off.

What will the new tournament be called?

No-one knows. Until broadcast negotiations take place later this year, that and other details will be under wraps.

Will Hampshire's Ageas Bowl be home to one of the eight city franchises?

Hampshire chairman Rod Bransgrove will certainly hope The Ageas Bowl - as one of the country's Test match venues - will be chosen. But there is stiff competition obviously. It is possible to see the eight teams being based in London (Lord's), Birmingham (Edgbaston), Leeds (Headingley), Manchester (Old Trafford), Nottingham (Trent Bridge), Newcastle (Riverside, Durham), Cardiff (Swalec Stadium) and Southampton (Ageas Bowl).

But that would leave Surrey's Oval ground unused. The capital could - and some would argue should - have two teams in the eight chosen.

After all, Sydney and Melbourne both have two teams in the Big Bash. But there are less cities in Australia.

The IPL franchises are all based in different cities, so London would only have one team if the ECB follow the IPL template.

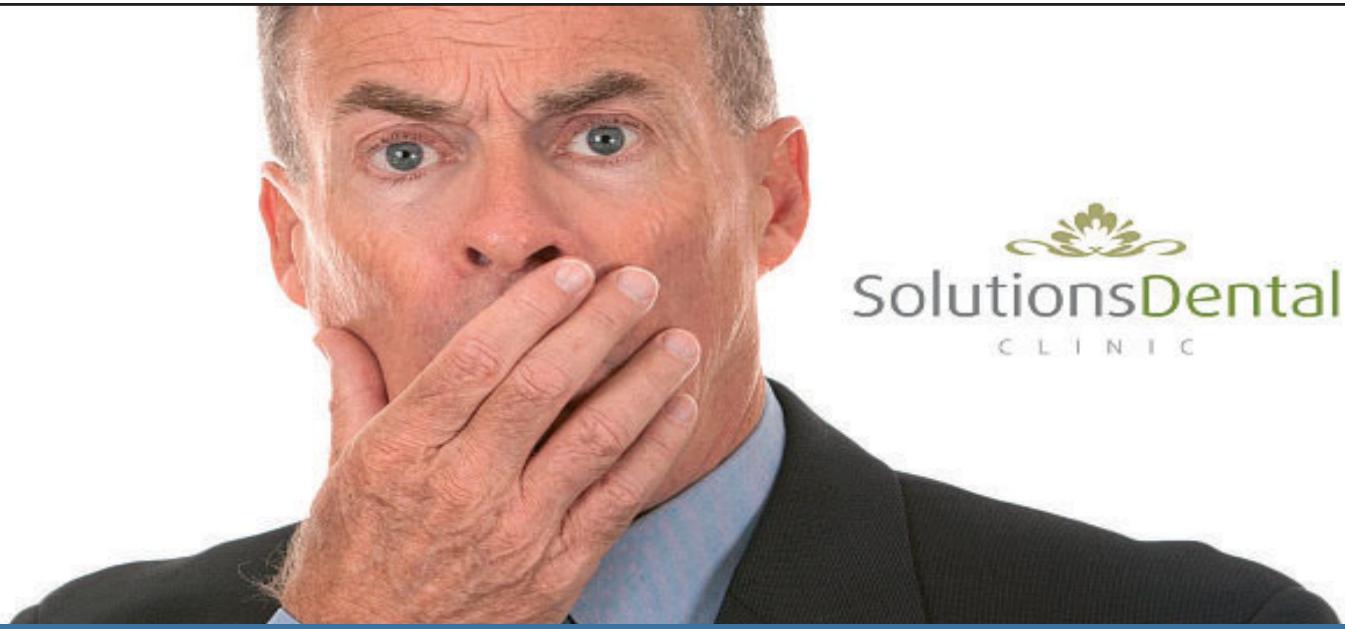
If the capital ended up with two teams, and The Ageas Bowl was also chosen, that would mean three of the eight being within a 80-mile or so radius of each other - leaving just five for the rest of the country (and Wales).

And what would the midlands and northern counties - and Glamorgan - think of that?

imposed alongside last year's mandatory relegation as one of several stringent conditions of the club's £3.8million ECB bailout. Though new chairman Sir Ian Botham and stalwart captain Paul Collingwood are already talking a good game, Durham have a mighty task on their hands - a plight exacerbated already by an early drain of home-grown talent tempted elsewhere.

SURREY ON TOP?

Durham's loss has been largely Surrey's gain so far, with key batsmen Mark Stoneman and Scott Borthwick both heading south. The two left-handers and their new employers will have high hopes this summer. After promotion the previous year, Surrey achieved a measure of consolidation in 2016. With two new talents at their disposal, and Kevin Pietersen in tow again for the NatWest Blast, there are realistic prospects of challenging for honours.



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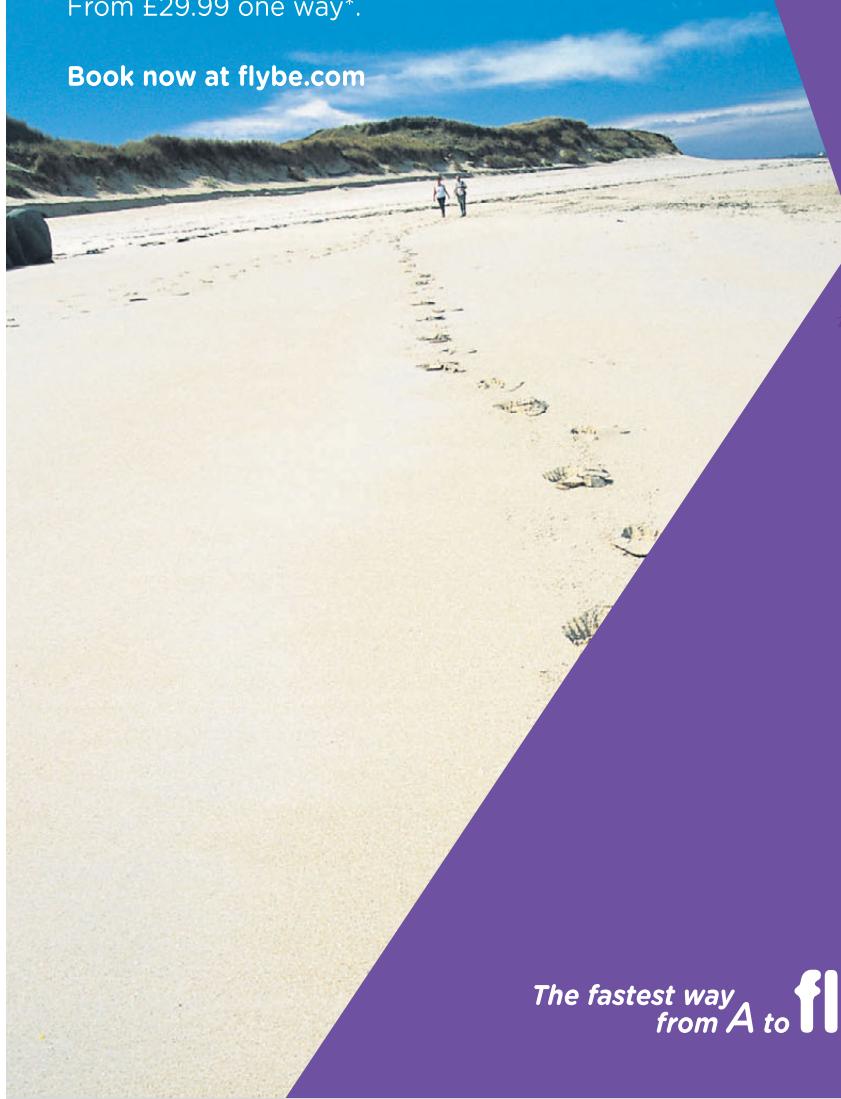
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PINK

US Masters contenders

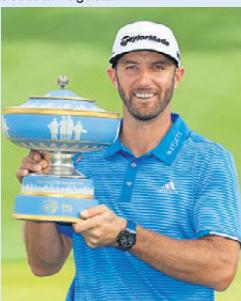
The first golf major of the year gets under way next week. Here, the Sports Pink looks at four contenders for the Masters at Augusta National.

DUSTIN JOHNSON

Where else to start than with the world number one and hottest player on the planet? Johnson won the Genesis Open to move to the top of the rankings for the first time and promptly won the WGC-Mexico Championship and WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play for good measure, before withdrawing from the Houston Open to rest ahead of the Masters. The 32-year-old has finished sixth and fourth at Augusta in the last two years and is a worthy 5/1 favourite to claim his second major title.

JORDAN SPIETH

Spieth's form figures at Augusta are a remarkable 2-1-2, although his record-breaking victory in 2015 will get far less attention than his dramatic collapse in the final round 12 months ago, when he squandered a five-shot lead on the back nine. Has been in good form in 2017 - he won the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in February - and his brilliant putting remains a massive asset at Augusta.



Dustin Johnson

RORY MCILROY

McIlroy's plans for a thorough build-up to the Masters were disrupted by a six-week injury lay-off, but that could work out in the Northern Irishman's favour with the focus shifting to Johnson and away from McIlroy's bid to complete the career grand slam. The four-time major winner has finished second, seventh and fourth in his three stroke play events in 2017 and an early exit from the WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play allowed him to get some early practice at Augusta, where he has finished inside the top 10 on his last three starts.

PAUL CASEY

Casey has recorded eight top-10 finishes in major championships, with four of them coming in the Masters. Was sixth on his debut in 2004 and 10th in 2007, as well as finishing sixth in 2015 and fourth last year courtesy of a closing 67. The 39-year-old has yet to recapture the sort of form which saw him come second in back-to-back FedEx Cup play-off events and fourth in the Tour Championship last season, but did reach the last 16 of the WGC-Match Play.

Video assistant refs in first round of EFL Cup

Video Assistant Referees could be deployed in English football as early as August when the League Cup first round takes place.

The FA has indicated VARs could be trialled in next season's FA Cup, beginning in January 2018 with the FA Cup third round when Premier League teams join the competition.

But, if a trial is approved by the EFL board, VARs could be used in the EFL Cup from as soon as the first round.

EFL chief executive Shaun Harvey said this week: "As part of a trial the board will consider allowing the EFL Cup to be utilised.

"There are a number of rounds of the EFL Cup prior to that (the FA Cup third round).

"Theoretically it could happen from the

first round of the EFL Cup, which would be a team no higher than the Championship down to League Two."

VARs are currently being trialled, with FIFA president Gianni Infantino keen to employ the system during the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

The video official in Tuesday's friendly between France and Spain corrected two wrong decisions - disallowing an offside effort by Antoine Griezmann and awarding a goal for Gerard Deulofeu after an incorrect offside flag. Spain won 2-0 in Paris.

Approval for VARs to be employed in the EFL Cup could come as soon as May.

There is likely to be a longer wait before

VARs can be utilised in the Championship, League One and League Two.

Although some stadia will have the capacity to utilise VARs in the league, the EFL believe it is important for the same facilities to be available throughout.

Goal line technology is likely to come into the Championship for the first time next season.

Saints boss Claude Puel called for technology after his side lost in the League Cup final to Manchester United at Wembley in February.

Manolo Gabbiadini had an early strike ruled out for offside, which replays subsequently showed was an incorrect decision.

What next for VAR?

New video technology aimed at reducing the number of incorrect decisions in football gave a high-profile example of what it can achieve during Spain's friendly win over France earlier this week.

The video assistant referee (VAR) helped official Felix Zwayer to rule out a goal for France striker Antoine Griezmann before allowing the overturning of an offside flag against Gerard Deulofeu, with the technology showing the goal should stand.

Here, the Sports Pink asks some of the key questions about its introduction.

When did VAR begin?

The call for video technology has been heard for years, with the likes of Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger staunch advocates for a new system. Last summer, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) approved the use of video referees - with trials to be carried out before a full roll-out of any system. VAR has already debuted in the United States and was used during the Club World Cup. Video reviews were also permitted during France's friendly against Italy in September, with FIFA president Gianni Infantino declaring at the time that the sport had "Turned a new page in football's history book".

Everyone must be happy that such a system is being implemented?

Not quite. There are still those who prefer the referee's word to be final, with Infantino's predecessor Sepp Blatter one of those who was vocally against video technology for anything other than goal-line decision systems. Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said during his side's successful Club World Cup campaign that: "If you want my personal impression, it



Manolo Gabbiadini (centre) scores in the League Cup final, only for the goal to be disallowed. Had Video Assistant Referees been in place, Saints could well have won at Wembley.

could cause confusion. That's my personal opinion."

The main sticking point for those against the introduction of VAR appears to stem from the amount of time taken for the dialogue between the on-pitch referees and those in charge of the video replays.

So, when can it be used during a game?

FIFA highlight four scenarios for when an official can be aided by the VAR and their website offers a guide to what the system can help with.

Goals: The role of VARs is to assist the referee to determine whether there was an infringement that means a goal should

not be awarded. As the ball has crossed the line, play is interrupted so there is no direct impact on the game.

Penalty Decisions: The role of the VAR is to ensure that no clearly wrong decisions are made in conjunction with the award or non-award of a penalty kick.

Red card incidents: The role of the VAR is to ensure that no clearly wrong decisions are made in conjunction with sending off or not sending off the player.

Mistaken Identity: The referee cautions or sends off the wrong player, or is unsure which player should be sanctioned.

The VARs will inform the referee so that the correct player can be disciplined.

What is next for

the system?

FIFA intends to use VAR at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where it will truly be tested in front of a global audience. Infantino has also stated the technology will be used in the Under-20 World Cup in May and at the Confederations Cup the following month.

Closer to home, fans will be able to see VAR in action in next season's FA Cup - if Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn gets his way.

Glenn said at last month's IFAB meeting at Wembley that the technology would not be ready to use in August's Community Shield, but wants to see it rolled out in the FA Cup from the third round onwards.

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Top tips

Ashley Iveson with four horses that can reward backers in the Randox Health Grand National:

WINNER

VIEUX LION ROUGE (David Pipe)

The winner of three bumpers and as many races over hurdles, this French-bred gelding remains dangerously unexposed over fences, having won five of his nine starts. He belied that inexperience when negotiating the famous Aintree birch to be a creditable seventh in last year's National, and again showed his liking



David Pipe.

for Merseyside in December's Becher Chase, rallying to the cause to get up and beat defending champion Highland Lodge. Pipe sensibly kept his charge off the track until the publication of the National weights and he was again shown in a good light when he came out to win the National Trial at Haydock. Huge chance.

EACH-WAY FANCIES

HIGHLAND LODGE (Jimmy Moffatt)

Victory for this 11-year-old would be something of a fairytale, but then there is no race like the National for throwing up a good story. Highland Lodge narrowly missed the cut for the Aintree spectacular after victory in last season's Becher Chase. He subsequently failed to fire in the Scottish equivalent at Ayr, but appeared rejuvenated by a return to Merseyside when coming within a short head of defending his Becher crown under Henry Brooke.

UCELO CONTI (Gordon Elliott)

Fancied by many last year after sound efforts in the Paddy Power Chase at Leopardstown and the Thyestes Chase at Gowran Park, the French import was far from disgraced in finishing sixth following a couple of notable jumping errors. He safely navigated the track again when fourth in the Becher before placing in the Thyestes once more, beating all bar the impressive Champagne West. Well capable of bettering last year's effort at the age of nine.

ROGUE ANGEL (Mouse Morris)

The trainer of 2016 Grand National hero Rule The World said of this fellow when last year's weights were unveiled: "I'd love to run Rogue Angel if he got in - I'd nearly ride him myself". The son of Presenting did not make the cut, but did win the Irish Grand National less than a fortnight earlier, proving his appetite for this sort of stamina test.

PINK

A to Z of Grand

AMATEURS: Unlike the Derby, the Grand National often sees amateur riders taking on and beating the professionals. The big race was most recently won by a member of the unpaid ranks when journalist Marcus Armytage scored on Mr Frisk in 1990. Gold Cup-winning rider Sam Waley-Cohen was second on Oscar Time in 2011 and fourth on the same horse in 2013.

BECHER'S BROOK: The 1839 National gave us the legendary Becher's Brook, jumped as the sixth and 22nd fence in the great race. Captain Martin Becher fell from his horse Conrad at the ditch and crawled into the brook to escape the rest of the field jumping on him. He is reported to have said he "never knew water tasted so foul without whisky in it". There have been many fallers at this notorious fence since then and in 1990 Becher's Brook was straightened and the ditch partially filled in to make it safer. Further amendments have been made in recent years, not always to the approval of the hard-core traditionalists but almost certainly for the good of horse and rider, not to mention the viewing public.

CHAIR: The Chair, the 15th fence in the race, is the biggest obstacle on the course. It is so-called because of its position alongside the 'seat' erected for the 'distance' judge.

DOUGLAS: Former British Lions rugby union international John Douglas won the Grand National as an owner in 1979. His 10-year-old Rubstic scored at 25-1 to give Scotland its one and only success in the race.

ELBOW: One of the most famous parts of the Aintree track, where many a race has totally changed complexion. After jumping the final fence, the runners must navigate a kink in the rail before straightening up again for the final thrust for glory. Red Rum overhauled the gallant Crisp after the Elbow in the 1973, while Seagram did the same to Gold Cup winner Garrison Savannah in 1991.

FAVOURITES: Rough Quest was the first winning favourite in 14 years when he scored at 7-1 in 1996 and market leader Earth Summit struck just two years later at the same odds. Golden Miller started the shortest-priced favourite ever in 1935 at 2-1 but failed to complete the course. The last favourite to win was 10-1 chance Don't Push It in 2010.

GREYS: Only three grey horses



have ever won the Grand National in its 150-year history. The Lamb (1868 and 1871), Nicolaus Silver (1961) and Neptune Col-

Pass, Hedgehunter, Numbersix-valverde, Silver Birch and Rule The World) have followed since then.

HOLIDAY: Holiday camp owner Fred Pontin won the National in 1971. His nine-year-old Specify got up close home to score by a neck in a thrilling finish.

IRISH: Bobbyjo ended a 24-year drought for Irish-trained horses when winning in 1999. A further six horses (Papillon, Monty's

Pass, Hedgehunter, Numbersix-valverde, Silver Birch and Rule The World) have followed since then.

JOCKEYS: Ruby Walsh and Leighton Aspell are the only jockeys still riding to have won the Grand National twice - Walsh on Hedgehunter (2005) and Papillon (2000), Aspell on Pineau De Re (2014) and Many Clouds (2015).

KILMORE: Kilmore, in 1962, was the second Grand National winner as a jockey for Fred Win-

ter, who went on to land the race as a trainer with Jay Trump in 1965 and Anglo in 1966.

LADY RIDERS: Charlotte Brew became the first woman to ride in the Grand National in 1977. Her mount Barony Fort refused at the fourth-last fence. Geraldine Rees was the first to complete the course, on Cheers in 1982. Rosemary Henderson, a 51-year-old grandmother, finished fifth on Fiddlers Pike in 1994, while Carrie Ford occupied the same position on Forest Gunner in 2005.

PINK PINK

National facts

Red Rum, with jockey Brian Fletcher, led into the winners' enclosure by trainer Donald 'Ginger' McCain after winning his second Grand National in 1974. Right - 100-1 shot Foinavon jumps the last fence on his way to victory in 1967.



Nina Carberry was ninth on Forest Gunner a year later and seventh on Character Building in 2010. Katie Walsh topped them all in 2012 when finishing a magnificent third on Seabass, trained by her father, Ted.

MOVIES: Aldaniti's emotional 1981 success inspired the movie 'Champions'. John Hurt portrayed Bob Champion, who fought back from cancer to land the National on a horse who overcame career-threatening injury himself.

NICKEL: Nickel Coin was the last mare to win the Grand National, in 1951. Closest to scoring for the fairer sex in recent years have been Dubacilla and Ebony Jane, fourth in 1995 and 1994 respectively, and Auntie Dot, third in 1991.

OUTSIDERS: Five horses have won the race at odds of 100-1 - Tipperary Tim (1928), Grelalach (1929), Caughoo (1947), Foinavon (1967) and Mon Mome (2009).

PLASTIC: Fences now have

plastic inserts to replace the traditional timber and rubber padding 'cores' and are more forgiving on horses should they knock the top of the birch off, and in turn reduce the risk of injury.

QUEEN MOTHER: The Queen Mother looked certain to gain a popular success in 1956 when Devon Loch was clear on the run-in. But he suddenly sprawled flat on the ground yards from the winning post and ESB galloped past to steal the prize.

RED RUM: No horse can match Red Rum's Grand National record. Winner of the race in 1973 and 1974, he was second the next two years before his historic third victory in 1977. After his retirement on the eve of the National in 1978, he regularly led the parade of runners before the start. He died in 1995 and is buried by the winning post at Aintree.

START: As part of safety changes, the start of the race has been moved forward by around 90 yards this year, closer to the first fence and away from the grandstands, meaning the National is now run over short of the long-standing four and a half miles.

TELEVISION: The National remains a viewing institution as far as racing goes and is now screened in no fewer than 84 countries, with an estimated worldwide audience of over 500million. This year will be the first one broadcast on ITV since it took over rights from Channel 4.

USA: Ex-American chasers Jay Trump and Ben Nevis came across to Britain to land the National in 1965 and 1980 respectively. Uncle Merlin might well have emulated them but for unseating Hywel Davies at Becher's second time round in 1990.

VOLUPTUARY: Voluptuary, bred by Queen Victoria, had never jumped a fence before winning the National in 1884.

WINTER: The late, great Fred Winter is the only man to have ridden (Kilmore 1962, Sundew 1957) and trained (Jay Trump 1965, Anglo 1966) two Grand National winners.

X-RATED: Mick Fitzgerald was overcome by his victory on Rough Quest in 1996, saying: 'I've never enjoyed 12 minutes as much before. Sex is an anti-climax after that!'

YOUNGEST: Bruce Hobbs was the youngest jockey to win the National, scoring on Battleship in 1938 at the age of 17. Oldest successful rider was 48-year-old Dick Saunders on Grittar in 1982. Tim Duran was the oldest jockey to complete the course, partnering Highlandie in 1968 at the age of 68.

ZONGALERO: When Zongalero finished a length-and-a-half second to Rubstic in the 1979 National he completed an unhappy hat-trick. He had also been runner-up in the Mackeson Gold Cup and Massey-Ferguson Gold Cup and ended the season without a win to his name.

Flat fancies

Nick Grant reveals his 10 to follow for the new flat racing season ...

CRACKSMAN (3yo, John Gosden)

"He's next year's horse," was the immediate verdict of his trainer after the Frankel colt, who races in the colours of Golden Horn, won his maiden over a mile at Newmarket in October. Showed his appetite for a battle when pressed and promises to be even better stepped up to 10 furlongs, and who knows beyond that.

QUEEN'S TRUST (4yo, Sir Michael Stoute)

Was given a magnificent Frankie Dettori ride to win at the Breeders' Cup and is expected to thrive as a four-year-old, with any number of options open to her - from 10 furlongs to a mile and a half. Trainer is a master with older horses, so is in the right hands.

MIRAGE DANCER (3yo, Sir Michael Stoute)

Another Frankel colt, victory looked unlikely in a seven-furlong affair at Doncaster before he really picked up well for Ryan Moore to ultimately win cosily, prompting Khalid Abdullah's racing manager Teddy Grimthorpe to say: "He's a horse we've always liked and next year should be the interesting one."

SEA OF GRACE (3yo, William Haggas)

It was a blow for fans of John Oxx to see this filly leave his yard, as she looks destined to make up into a Classic contender. Whether that is at a mile or a mile and a half remains to be seen, but there was so much to like about her two victories over the equally-promising Ezirya last season and she looks to have a great attitude for the game.

ULYSSES (4yo, Sir Michael Stoute)

A fair bit was asked of this Galileo colt after winning his maiden in May, taking in the Derby and Breeders' Cup among other notable engagements. He fell a bit short but the very fact he ran in those races tells a story and he promises to be much better for another winter on his back.

MINDING (4yo, Aidan O'Brien)

Seven career Group One successes to date says plenty about this brilliant filly, who came good against the colts in the QEII at Ascot and ably defeated the likes of Ribchester. Fully effective from a mile to a mile and a half, every option will be open and her progress as an older horse will be eagerly followed.

CRIMEAN TATAR (4yo, Hugo Palmer)

Has always been held in high regard but failed to make the track until last year. Really took the eye in winning a mile-and-a-half Listed race at Kempton and is expected to be a player in the top long-distance events.

DREAMFIELD (3yo, John Gosden)

Easy debut winner but made to pull out all the stops when all the rage for a Newmarket conditions event. The form of that looks better than it did at the time and he is bred to come into his own as a three-year-old.

SIR JOHN LAVERY (3yo, Aidan O'Brien)

Confirmed promise of eye-catching Curragh third on debut to run away with a Gowran maiden in testing conditions. Galileo colt from the family of Hawk Wing and could develop into a Derby contender.

LIBRISA BREEZE (5yo, Dean Ivory)

Made giant strides last season and produced the finishing burst of the season to win a valuable seven-furlong handicap at Ascot in September.

PINK

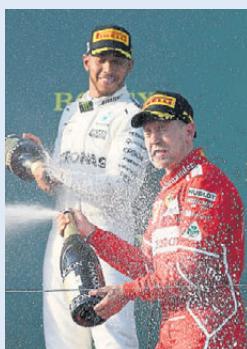
Just what F1 needed

Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel saw off the challenge from Lewis Hamilton to win the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

Here, the Sports Pink dissects five key talking points from the opening round of the season.

Ferrari really are the real deal

F1 has become so accustomed to watching a Mercedes car win that the predictability of their dominance has become a turn off for many fans. So to see Ferrari not just match Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes but beat them, too, is precisely what this new era required. Of course this is only one race, and it is worth noting that Vettel should



Sebastian Vettel, right, and Lewis Hamilton after last week's Melbourne GP.

have won here last year but for a dodgy strategy call. But the resurgence of the Prancing Horse should hopefully provide us with the ingredients for a scintillating season.

New year. Same old McLaren

While Ferrari are back on top of their game, the same cannot be said for another of Formula One's finest constructors. Fernando Alonso and team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne failed to finish in Melbourne, and while the former was on course for a miraculous point before his suspension packed up in the closing stages, he believes the once-mighty McLaren are currently the worst team. "I was driving one of my best races," Alonso, the double world champion, said. "But we are last in terms of performance." Ouch. *Cont on facing page*



Westgate's Year 10s and, right, Rohan Sunar (left), Josh Bowerman (centre) and Oli Smallbone (right) scored in Romsey's 3-1 U15 Cup final win.

Jacob and co gain their cup revenge



Romsey under-15s



Mountbatten School's Year 10 team.

By Mike Vimpany



Jacob Phrachai notched a hat-trick as Romsey U15s beat Andover's John Hanson 4-2 after extra-time to reverse last season's age group defeat in the Eastleigh & Winchester District Schools cup final.

John Hanson were 4-1 winners at Under-14 level last year, but two first half goals by Phrachai – the opener a first minute header – put Romsey in control.

Undeterred, John Hansen fought back, with Caleen Geary and Matthew Williams scoring to take the final into extra-time.

But Romsey found another gear, with Filip Fraczek-Krygier restoring their lead and Phrachai completing his hat-trick shortly before the final whistle to clinch a 4-2 win.

Westgate were quick off the mark against Mountbatten in the Year 10 Plate final – Rohan Sunar heading them in front within the opening 90 seconds.

Josh Bowerman doubled Westgate's lead before Oli Smallbone added a third. Jack Darnton replied.

The Under-16 final wasn't decided until the second half with Jack Mansbridge scoring twice to seal a 2-0 win for Mountbatten over Thornden.

Other cup final scores –
 Year 7: Final – Thornden 6 John Hanson 2. Plate – Perins 3 Test Valley 4.
 Year 8: Final – Mountbatten 2 Henry Beaufort 1. Plate – John Hanson 3 Harrow Way 2.
 Year 9: Final – Thornden 4 Wyvern 0. Plate – Perins 5 Romsey 4.
 Year 11: Plate – Romsey 7 Henry Beaufort 5 (aet).

PINK



Romsey celebrate taking the lead against John Hansen School,



Romsey (white) v John Hansen School.



Wyvern Girls (blues) have just scored against Kings' School.



Wyvern (blues) v Kings' School. All pictures by Chris Moorhouse.



Crestwood (blue) v Westgate.



Thornden (red) v Mountbatten.



Thornden (red) v Mountbatten.



Westgate (red) v Mountbatten.

from facing page

Weekend to forget for Palmer

Jolyon Palmer headed into his second season full of hope, but the 26-year-old from Horsham endured one of the worst weekends of his short career. Palmer crashed in practice before qualifying last - an eye-watering 3.3 seconds adrift of team-mate Nico Hulkenberg in the same Renault machinery - and then failed to finish the race. Palmer rose to 14th but a brake issue forced him to call it quits on lap 18.

Home is not where the heart is

Daniel Ricciardo completed a mammoth 18 hours of media commitments in just one day last week, such is Australia's love for their home hero. But Ricciardo's weekend never



Jolyon Palmer

got going. He made an uncharacteristic error in qualifying after crashing out and then stopped en route to taking up his position on the grid. Red Bull managed to get him in the race - albeit two laps down - but he retired with a mechanical issue. .

Is the new F1 an improvement?

The race on Sunday was the first following significant changes to the regulations, and since American giants Liberty Media acquired the sport. The show itself was hardly a thrill-a-minute spectacle. It is suspected that the extra downforce on the new cars and increased air flow makes it harder to follow and harder to overtake. It has always been hard to pass around the narrow Albert Park circuit, so the acid test will come at the next round in China.

PINK

Chance is a fine thing for leaders Portside!

Bridge Manor beat Portside 4-3 to stay top of Junior 3 of the City of Southampton Sunday League.

Damon Chance (2), Aaron Fielder and Karl Stinchcomb netted with Michael Brown and Ben Rankin (2) replying. A.F.C. Spitfire defeated Romsey Comrades 2-1 with a Damian Slawkowski brace. Adam Bessant replied.

Portsmouth Reserves defeated Bedford Arms 2-1 to stay top of Junior 4 thanks to Sam Bessant and Matt Winters. Ollie Winters replied.

Mayfield Rovers beat Hedge End 6-3 with Aiden Reidy (2), James Shirley, Frazer Weeks, Nick Chalks and an own goal on target. Matt Dipper, Bradley Isaacs and Jacob Ainslie replied.

Jordan Amos fired a hat-trick as Sholing Monks caned R.S. Nomansland Reserves 5-0. Gavin Ford and Stephen Newman also scored.

Bottom side Whitehart lost 3-2 to Chamberlayne Reserves, who netted through Lewis Wyeth, Shaun Looker and Sam Judd. Ryan Nobbles and Liam Harfield replied.

Callum Wookey hit a hat-trick as AFC Mayflower beat AFC Hedge Town 5-1. Terry Peat struck twice with Mac Smith replying.

Keeper Ryan Watts saved a penalty as A.F.C. Itchen beat Sporting Compass 1-0. Rowland Ryan netted the only goal in the first half. Athletico Romsey defeated Banister Park 2-1 with goals from Tom Munday and Pete Southwick. Will Cox replied.

Burridge A.F.C. defeated Cricks A.F.C. 5-2 through Dave Middleton (2), Richard Bechley, Karl Atkin and Tony White.

Dan's spot on as Fawley lift cup

DAN Fry was the spot-kick hero as Fawley RBL lifted the Southampton FA Sunday Junior A Cup (Adults).

Fry converted a second half penalty for the only goal of the game against Bridge Manor.

In the Charlie Godden Trophy semi-finals, Sean Haines netted twice in Testland Reserves' 3-1 victory over Barway. Luca Cordeddu also netted with Wayne Atkin replying.

In the Premier Division of the City of Southampton Sunday League, A.F.C. West End are still searching for their first win after losing 2-1 to Chamberlayne Athletic.

Ryan Stephenson and Lee Osbourne scored with Luke Harry replying.

Itchen Saints extended their lead at the top with a 3-1 win over second placed Crusaders. Aiden Johnson (2) and Tony Hammond scored after Shaun Jones had given Crusaders a half-time lead.

The Senior Division saw an eight goal thriller with league leaders RS Nomansland crashing 6-2 to C.D.A. Sam Barton struck a hat-trick with further goals coming from Martin Randall (2) and Gareth Pack. Dan Sanders and Ben Dawkins replied.

Sam Treadaway and Ben Duckett replied as Cricketers Arms lost 3-2 to AFC Riverside.

Ryan Fuller grabbed the only goal as Testlands beat Boyatt Wood.

Junior 1 table toppers Bishops were held to a 3-3 draw by Eastpoint. Paul Tanner, Jamie Salvi and John Frostick netted for Bishops with Elliott Bassett (2) and Gift Ngubane replying.

A.F.C. Soton closed the gap on Bishops with a 2-0 win over Bitterne Ducks, thanks to goals from Aiden Collins and Sukharj Dosanjh.

In Junior 2, leaders Fawley RBL



Totton's Alfie Whittingham, right, splashes through the puddle against Bideford. See Page 7.

caned rock bottom AFC Dorchester 5-0. Cup final hero Dan Fry struck a hat-trick with Jake Volter and Sean Auger also netting. Second half saviour Mitch

Young scored twice in Curbridge's 2-1 win over Hunters Inn. Henry Rule replied.

Lyndhurst beat Fryern 1-0 with Ali Pugi on target.

Test Valley Spartans defeated Marchwood Rangers 3-2 with Sam Crabbe (2) and Ollie Sharpe netting. Sam Johnstone and Dan Coleman replied.

Munro Cup final looks full of goals

It could be goals all the way when Peter Symonds' face Itchen in Wednesday's Peter Munro Cup final at Sparsholt College (2pm), where the Winchester students are eyeing a potential league and cup double.

The three games between the two finalists this season have produced 23 goals – Peter Symonds scoring 14 of them!

They won a bizarre autumn affair 7-4 (Itchen clawing back a four-goal deficit before half-time) and followed it up with a 5-3 AOC Cup tie victory before honours were shared in a 2-2 draw in the Middle Lane mud in the return league fixture.

Having already celebrated a second consecutive Colleges League championship, Peter Symonds will start favourites.

But Itchen are boosted by the return from England Schools' duty of wing back Jean-Luc Ramdin and name Pompey hopeful Sam Woodward in their starting line up.

PSC will rely on the pace of Pete Thatcher and top gun Max Kirwan up front, while the midfield tussle between Symonds' Harry Bayles and county team-mate Jack Wilson could be key to the outcome.

SQUADS

Itchen: George Bevis, Dan Hughes, Joe Morris, Will Gange, Jack Fisher, Jean-Luc Ramdin, Jack Wilson, Jack Barnes, Jake Willis-Dellimore, Nick Yeomans, Sam Woodward. Subs: Hamad Haidar, Cameron Russell, Ben Tiffin, James Smith, Jason Probert.

Peter Symonds: Aaron Whitmarsh, Dan Burdock, Mick Robinson, Kristian Jukes, Keegan Clark, Ben Moore, Tom Steggall, Harry Bayles, Joe Eller, Pete Thatcher, Jay Bugg, Max Kirwan, Charlie Wallbridge, Anthony Croucher, Billy Brindley, Jamie Howells.

● Itchen and Peter Symonds are also involved in two other cup finals at Sparsholt on Wednesday.

Itchen start favourites against Basingstoke in the Second XI final, but the third team showdown between Barton Peveril and Peter Symonds on the bottom pitch could go either way.

Panthers trounced

Lofty A.F.C. Forestside trounced Park Gate Panthers 4-0 in Junior 6 of the City of Southampton Sunday League.

The second placed side netted through Josh Metcalfe (2), Sam Vidler and Liam Golding.

Chamberlayne Athletic 'A' hit back from 1-2 down at half-time to beat Abbotswood 3-2 with goals from Harry Collins (2) and Ben Finn. Mike Knott and Mike Sacree replied.

Riverside Ranger thumped Hamwic Wavers 5-2 with Peter Kerr (2) Josh Willats, Jamie Roberts and an own goal on target. Pawel Burdzy and Maciek Szumski replied.

Ben Hatcher (2) and Chris Walcroft scored as Nemesis beat Southern Sports 3-2. Joe Watts and Amih Morjaria replied.

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PINK RESULTS

SATURDAY'S FOOTBALL RESULTS AND TABLES

Premier League

	HOME	AWAY													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Burnley	0	Tottenham Hotspur	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-0		Dier 56													
		San 77													
HT 21:58a		Att 21:58a													
Chelsea	1	Crystal P	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fabregas 5		Zaha 9													
		Benteke 11													
HT 1-2															
Hull	2	West Ham	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-0		Robertson 53													
		Ranocchia 85													
HT 0-1		Att 20:82a													
Leicester	0	Stoke	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ndidi 25		Vardy 47													
HT 1-0		Att 31:58a													
Liverpool	3	Everton	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mane 8		Pennington 18													
Coutinho 31															
Origi 60															
HT 2-1		Att 57:39a													
Man Utd	0	W.B.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-0		Att 75:39a													
SAINTS	L	AFC Bournemouth	L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT L-L															
Watford	1	Sunderland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brits 59															
HT 0-0		Att 20:80a													

	HOME	AWAY													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Chelsea	29	12	0	2	37	10	10	3	2	23	13	69			
Tottenham	29	13	0	3	35	8	5	6	3	22	13	62			
Liverpool	31	11	3	1	33	14	6	5	4	25	25	59			
Man City	28	7	6	1	24	14	10	0	4	30	16	57			
Man Utd	28	8	7	0	20	14	3	3	2	22	13	52			
Arsenal	27	9	4	2	26	13	6	3	5	30	21	50			
Everton	30	10	4	3	34	10	4	7	18	23	50				
W.B.A.	30	9	2	4	27	18	3	6	6	12	20	44			
Stoke	30	6	5	4	19	17	3	4	8	14	27	36			
Watford	29	6	4	5	22	23	3	3	8	12	25	54			
SAINTS	27	5	3	4	14	14	4	3	8	19	22	33			
Bournemouth	27	7	3	5	23	23	2	3	9	16	31	33			
Leicester	28	8	3	4	21	18	3	10	11	20	33				
West Ham	30	5	3	7	17	27	4	3	8	24	27	33			
Burnley	30	9	2	4	22	14	0	3	12	9	32	62			
Crystal P	29	4	1	9	15	20	5	3	7	23	27	51			
Swansea	29	5	2	7	21	30	3	1	11	15	33	27			
Hull	30	6	4	5	21	24	1	2	12	7	35	27			
Middleb	28	3	4	7	12	17	1	6	7	8	16	22			
Sunderland	29	3	4	8	14	26	2	1	11	10	25	20			

SkyBet Championship

	HOME	AWAY													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
A. Villa	2	Norwich	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kodjia 25,87															
HT 1-0		Att 32:00a													
Barnsley	1	Sheff Wed	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MacDonald 90		Winnall 90													
HT 0-0		Att 18:00a													
Brentford	2	Bristol C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carne 26															
Vase 26															
HT 2-0		Att 11:36a													
Brighton	1	Blackburn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murray 67															
HT 0-0		Att 10:00a													
Huddersf	0	Burton Albion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-0		Att 30:15a													
Ipswich	1	Birmingham	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ward 72		Grounds 48													
HT 0-0		Att 16:46a													
Newcastle	2	Wigan	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gayle 36		Jacobs 50													
Ritchie 57															
HT 1-0		Att 51:84a													
Preston North End	1	Nottm For	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
McGeady 52		Asombalanga 22													
HT 0-1		Att 12:45a													
Reading	L	Leeds Utd	L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT L-L															
Rotherham	0	Fulham	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-0		Att 20:51a													

SkyBet League Two

	HOME	AWAY													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Cheltenham	3	3	0	3	34	14	10	7	3	33	20	8	5	6	22
Pell 33,57		Boyle 78 og													
Wright 48 pen															
HT 1-0		Att 2:25a													
Crewe	1	Cambridge	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legge 58 og		Berry 37,72													
HT 0-1		Att 37,59a													
Grimsby	1	Doncaster	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S Jones 34		Marquis 37,43,61													
HT 1-2		Att 6,82a													
Hartlepool	0	POMPEY	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hartlepool	0	POMPEY	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-1		Att 4,50a													
Leyton O	0	Wycombe	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HT 0-1		Att 4,50a													
Luton	1	Blackpool	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palmer 90		Att 4,52a													
HT 0-0		Att 7,96a													
Mansfield	1	Exeter	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benning 38		Harley 84													